

State General Assistance Programs 1996

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Assessing the New Federalism

In 1996 the Urban Institute began a major study of devolution and its consequences entitled *Assessing the New Federalism*, of which this report is a part. Funded principally by the Annie E. Casey Foundation with major support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, this study will monitor the changes in state and local policies and child and family well-being that follow from federal devolution during the 1990s. The goal is to provide policy makers and local communities with objective information about the social implications of new federal-state relationships, in order to expand the nation's capacity to make informed choices and direct change for the betterment of families, children, and communities. The Institute will disseminate the project's findings through a variety of mechanisms, including policy briefs, research papers, annual reports, issues forums, and public briefings.

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This paper is dedicated to the memory of Steven D. Gold, who was co-director of *Assessing the New Federalism* until his death in August 1996.



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Benefit decreases and tightening eligibility rules in recently enacted welfare reform legislation will put greater pressure on non-federally funded government and other programs to fill the void in assistance to those in need.¹ Among the most important of these non-federally funded government programs are the General Assistance (GA) programs. GA programs provide cash and/or in-kind benefits to low-income persons who are not eligible for federally funded cash assistance. Each program is financed and administered entirely through the state, county, and/or locality in which it operates. These programs are the last resort for many in need. However, GA coverage is incomplete and shrinking, and GA benefits are generally low and decreasing.

This report provides information on the availability of GA across the states, and for states with programs, the characteristics of those programs, including program eligibility requirements, benefit levels, and caseload and expenditure data. We also report on significant program changes made since the last comprehensive survey of GA programs conducted in 1992 by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the National Conference of State Legislatures. The information for this study was collected through a telephone survey of each state and the District of Columbia between June and August 1996.

This information will be critical for evaluating the impacts of federal welfare reform legislation. In particular, it can be used to gauge the extent to which persons no longer eligible for federally funded programs can be assisted through GA. It will also provide a baseline against which to measure any changes states make to their GA programs in the future.

Gaps in the Federal Safety Net

The federal safety net includes several federally funded programs that provide assistance to low-income persons or families. These programs generally benefit particular groups in need, including disabled persons and families with children. Gaps in the federal safety net, however, leave some persons in need without federal cash assistance.

1. President Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 on August 22, 1996.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) provides cash payments to needy aged, blind, and disabled persons. However, among low-income persons with disabilities, SSI is available only to those with a permanent disability expected to last for at least 12 months or to result in death, and that is severe enough to prevent "substantial gainful activity." Persons with temporary or less severe disabilities are ineligible. Furthermore, the program's lengthy certification process results in some persons waiting 12 or more months before receiving benefits.

Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) provides cash grants for needy children (and their parents or caretakers) who have been deprived of parental support or care because one parent is absent from the home, incapacitated, or deceased, or the parent who is the principal earner is unemployed. A portion of needy children and families with children is ineligible for AFDC. This ineligible group includes two-parent intact families that meet AFDC financial eligibility criteria but whose principal wage earner does not meet the state's work history or hours requirements. In addition, women pregnant with their first child cannot become eligible for AFDC until their third trimester, leaving them without assistance during their first two trimesters. Able-bodied employable individuals without children are not typically eligible for either AFDC or SSI.

In addition to cash assistance provided through SSI and AFDC, other federal programs provide in-kind assistance. Medicaid provides medical assistance to low-income persons, and eligibility is generally linked to SSI and AFDC. Low-income households may also be eligible to receive food stamps.

Recently passed welfare reform legislation will widen existing gaps in the federal safety net. Welfare reform transfers much of the responsibility for assisting persons in need from the federal government to the states. Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), a state-run assistance program for low-income children that will be funded by a federal block grant, will replace AFDC. Federal welfare assistance will be limited to a lifetime total of five years, and most able-bodied adults must work after two years of assistance. In addition, most legal immigrants will lose their eligibility for SSI and food stamps. Furthermore, unemployed childless couples will have their food stamp benefits limited to three months over a three-year period.

What Is the Role of General Assistance?

The majority of states currently attempt to fill the gaps in the federal safety net by providing cash or in-kind assistance to at least a portion of needy persons ineligible for federally funded cash assistance programs. However, there is no uniform definition of General Assistance. Indeed, program names, eligibility criteria, and benefits falling under the rubric of General Assistance vary widely by state, and in many cases program elements also vary within states. For the purposes of this report, we define General Assistance programs as cash or in-kind assistance programs for low-income individuals and families that are funded solely with state, county, or local funds (or a combination of these). This definition includes interim assistance programs available for persons waiting to become eligible for SSI. Although several states also have state-funded emergency assistance programs that typically consist of a one-time grant, we limit our definition to programs providing assistance on a more ongoing basis.

Table 1.1 summarizes state GA programs. Forty-two states have a GA program in at least some localities. Of these, 33 states have programs throughout the state, and 9 states have programs in a portion of the state only. The populations served by GA programs vary widely by state, and we've divided the populations served into three groups: (1) persons who are disabled, elderly, and/or otherwise unemployable, (2) children and/or families with children, and (3) employable individuals without children. All 42 states with a GA program provide benefits to persons who are disabled, elderly, and/or otherwise unemployable. Thirty-one GA programs assist children and/or families with children. Only 16 programs assist employable individuals without children.

The form and amount of GA benefits also vary widely across programs. Twenty-eight states provide cash benefits to all recipients and 11 states provide in-kind benefits for all recipients, either through vendor payments or vouchers. The GA programs in the remaining three states provide either cash or vendor payments/vouchers, depending on the eligible group. Among the states with cash benefits, benefit maximums as a percentage of the federal poverty threshold average about 40 percent, with maximum benefits ranging from 12 to 100 percent of poverty for individuals. The duration of benefits also varies by state. Three-quarters of the GA programs either impose no time limits or impose limits on only a portion of recipients.

Table 1.1

General Assistance Programs at a Glance, by Number of States, Summer 1996	
<u>Availability of GA Programs</u>	
States with GA Programs	42
<i>Program throughout entire state</i>	33
<i>Program in only portion of the state</i>	9
States with no GA Program	9
<u>Populations Served by GA Programs</u>	
Disabled, elderly, and/or unemployable individuals	42
Children and/or families with children	31
Employable individuals without children	16
<u>Form of GA Benefits</u>	
Cash	28
Vendor Payments/Vouchers	11
Mix of Cash and Vendor Payments/Vouchers	3
<u>Maximum Cash Benefits as a Percentage of Poverty (individual recipients)</u>	
Average	39%
Low (Missouri)	12%
High (Nebraska)	100%
<u>Duration of GA Benefits</u>	
No time limits	18
Time limits for a portion of beneficiaries	15
Time limits for all beneficiaries	9
Source: Urban Institute 1996	

How Are State General Assistance Programs Administered?

As mentioned, 42 states have a General Assistance program in at least some localities; 33 states operate a program throughout the state and in 9 states the program operates only in some counties.² Table 1.2 indicates that of the 33 states with statewide programs, 25 have uniform eligibility rules across the state. Benefit schedules are also primarily uniform across these states, although some states set benefit levels that vary by the cost of living in different regions of the state. Typically, the state provides the administrative control and funding for these programs.

2. For the purposes of this paper, the District of Columbia is considered a state.

Table 1.2: Summary of General Assistance Programs, by State, Summer 1996

State (County/Locality) ¹	Where GA Programs Operate Within State	Categorical Eligibility ²			Individual Cash Benefit as a Percent of Poverty ³	Medical Assistance ⁴
		Disabled, Elderly, and/or Other Unemployable	Children/ Families with Children	Employable Adults Without Children		
New England						
Connecticut	Uniform Statewide	X	X	X	54%	X
Maine	Uniform Statewide	X	X	X	vp/v	X
Massachusetts	Uniform Statewide	X	X		53%	X
New Hampshire (City of Manchester)	Statewide/County Variability	X	X	X	vp/v	X
Rhode Island	Uniform Statewide	X	X		51%	X
Vermont	Uniform Statewide	X	X	X	vp/v	X
Mid Atlantic						
Delaware	Uniform Statewide	X	X		19%	X*
District of Columbia	Uniform Statewide	X	X		41%	X*
Maryland	Uniform Statewide	X	X		19%	X
New Jersey	Uniform Statewide	X	X	X	33%	X
New York	Uniform Statewide	X	X	X	55%	X
Pennsylvania	Uniform Statewide	X			33%	X
Great Lakes						
Illinois (City of Chicago)	Statewide/County Variability	X	X		33%	X
Indiana (Center Township of Marion County)	Statewide/County Variability	X	X	X	vp/v	X
Michigan	Uniform Statewide	X	X		38%	X
Ohio	Uniform Statewide	X	X		18%	X
Wisconsin (Dane County)	Some Counties	X			38%	X
Plains						
Iowa (Polk County)	Statewide/County Variability	X	X	X	vp/v	
Kansas	Uniform Statewide	X	X		30%	X
Minnesota	Uniform Statewide	X	X		31%	X
Missouri	Uniform Statewide	X	X		12%	X
Nebraska (b)	Uniform Statewide	X	X	X	100%	X
North Dakota (Cass County)	Some Counties	X			vp/v	
South Dakota (Minnehaha County)	Statewide/County Variability	X	X	X	vp/v	X
Southeast						
Alabama	No Program					
Arkansas	No Program					
Florida (Dade County)	Some Counties	X			34%	
Georgia (Fulton County)	Some Counties	X			35%	
Kentucky (Jefferson County)	Some Counties	X	X		vp/v	
Louisiana	No Program					
Mississippi	No Program					
North Carolina (Durham County)	Some Counties	X			vp/v	X
South Carolina	No Program					
Tennessee	No Program					
Virginia (Fairfax County)	Some Counties	X	X		34%	X
West Virginia	No Program					
Southwest						
Arizona	Uniform Statewide	X			27%	
New Mexico	Uniform Statewide	X	X		36%	
Oklahoma	No Program					
Texas (Harris County)	Some Counties	X			17%	
Rocky Mountain						
Colorado (City and County of Denver) (a)	Uniform Statewide	X	X	X	36%	
Idaho (Ada County)	Statewide/County Variability	X	X	X	vp/v	X
Montana (Yellowstone County)	Some Counties	X			vp/v	X
Utah	Uniform Statewide	X		X	45%	X
Wyoming	No Program					
Far West						
Alaska	Uniform Statewide	X	X	X	43%	X
California (Los Angeles County)	Statewide/County Variability	X	X	X	34%	X
Hawaii	Uniform Statewide	X	X		71%	X*
Nevada (Clark County)	Statewide/County Variability	X	X	X	43%	X
Oregon	Uniform Statewide	X			44%	X*
Washington	Uniform Statewide	X	X		54%	X

Source: Urban Institute 1996

Notes:

¹ Thirty-three states have GA programs throughout the entire state. Of these, 25 have uniform eligibility rules and benefit schedules. The remaining 8 states with statewide programs have county-based programs, with eligibility rules and benefit levels that vary by county. Information in this table for these 8 states along, with the 9 states in which GA programs operate only in some counties, reflects the GA program in the specific county indicated.

² States indicated as covering persons in a specific category may cover one or more of its subcategories. The category of children/families with children includes women pregnant with their first child. The category of employable adults without children includes able-bodied adults with some barriers to employment.

³ Figures were determined by using Poverty Thresholds for 1995 published by the Bureau of the Census (\$7,763 for one person).
vp/v=most benefits are in the form of vendor payments or vouchers

⁴ X*=Medical Assistance is provided through the state's Medicaid program.

(a) Nebraska has a statewide GA program for disabled persons; GA programs for other persons may vary by county. Information in table reflects state model guidelines.

(b) Colorado has a statewide GA program for disabled persons, although all other GA programs are left to local discretion, including whether to have a program.

The remaining eight statewide programs have eligibility rules and benefit schedules that vary by county or locality. Although state law in those states requires each county or locality to provide for its needy residents through a GA program, specific GA eligibility rules, benefit levels, administrative control, and funding are left largely to the county/locality.

Eighteen states do not mandate a GA program at either the state or local level. In nine of these states, some towns or counties have chosen to operate their own GA program. These localities tend to be located in the larger, more urban areas of the state. Programs vary widely from one county to the next. The remaining nine states have no GA program, and most of these states are located in the South.

Who Is Eligible?

Each General Assistance program has a set of eligibility criteria that serve to limit benefits to that portion of the population the state defines as most in need. These eligibility rules can generally be divided into five classifications: (1) categorical requirements, (2) financial requirements, (3) citizenship and residency requirements, (4) drug screening and treatment requirements, and (5) work requirements.

- ***Categorical Requirements.*** Twelve states provide assistance to all financially needy persons who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs yet meet the state's financial and other eligibility requirements. In contrast, 30 states provide assistance to certain categories of persons only. Among those programs, all provide assistance to at least one subcategory of persons who are disabled, elderly, or otherwise unemployable. Nineteen provide assistance to low-income children or families with children, including women pregnant with their first child. Four provide assistance to able-bodied employable adults or able-bodied adults with some barriers to employment.
- ***Financial Requirements.*** Income limits typically vary according to family size, and sometimes according to location of residence and/or the eligibility category. Income limits range from zero in Florida, Kentucky, and New Hampshire, to \$2,109 per month for a family of three in Hawaii. Generally, asset limits do not vary by family size. The majority of states set asset limits between \$1,000 and \$2,000.
- ***Citizenship and Residency Requirements.*** Thirty-six states limit eligibility to citizens and legal aliens. Three states (Idaho, New York, and North Carolina) have no citizenship requirements for all eligible persons; the District of Columbia and Minnesota have no citizenship requirements for persons under age 18, and Maine requires citizenship or legal

alien status of its able-bodied applicants only. Nearly all programs include residency requirements, requiring applicants to be state (or county) residents. Seven programs also include a durational residency requirement ranging from 15 days to 9 months.

- ***Drug Screening and Treatment Requirements.*** Seven states require drug and alcohol abuse treatment if the applicant or recipient is found to be drug- or alcohol- dependent. Rather than screening all applicants for drugs, most of these programs refer persons suspected or known to be chemically dependent to an appropriate facility for assessment. Assistance is then provided on the condition that the recipient enroll in and continue to receive treatment.
- ***Work Requirements.*** Twenty-one states require participation in work or training programs in order for employable adults to maintain benefits. Although nine states provide some opportunities for job training, counseling, or education, the emphasis in most states is on finding a job or working off the benefit amount.

How Much Assistance Is Provided?

The most common form of GA benefits is “cash” or a check payable directly to the recipient, and 28 of the states with GA programs provide cash assistance. Eleven GA programs provide only vendor payments or vouchers for all recipients. Vendor payments are 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, while vouchers can be used by recipients only for specific items, such as food or transportation. The GA programs in the remaining three states provide either cash or vendor payments/vouchers depending on the individual's eligibility group. In each of these three states, disabled recipients receive cash payments and all other recipients receive vendor payments or vouchers.

Benefit maximums differ among recipients according to their family size, eligibility category, and/or living arrangement. Among the states that provide cash benefits, benefit maximums as a percentage of the poverty threshold average about 40 percent. Missouri has the lowest cash benefit maximum for individual recipients, at 12 percent of poverty. Except for Hawaii and Nebraska, whose maximum benefits for individuals are 71 and 100 percent of poverty, respectively, all states set benefit maximums for individuals at or below 55 percent of poverty.

General Assistance benefits also vary in the duration of assistance. Eighteen states provide assistance on an ongoing basis; 15 impose time limits on a portion of recipients; and 9

states impose time limits on all recipients. States are more likely to exclude entire categories of recipients (usually employable adults) rather than provide GA for a limited period.

In addition to financial assistance, many GA recipients receive medical assistance through a variety of avenues. In four states (Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, and Oregon), all GA recipients are eligible for medical assistance under that state's Medicaid program. Of the remaining 37 states with GA programs, 29 provide medical assistance to some or all GA recipients, either through a formal state or county GA medical program or by providing benefits through the regular GA program that cover certain medical expenses. Among the 29 states that provide medical assistance outside of Medicaid, benefits vary widely. Benefits are usually more limited than those provided by Medicaid. In addition, some states without GA cash assistance programs provide alternative medical care programs for some or all of their needy residents who do not qualify for Medicaid.

How Many Persons Are Helped?

Although General Assistance caseloads vary widely across states, most state programs are relatively small. Among states with uniform statewide GA programs, the number of recipients assisted each month ranges from less than 0.1 percent of persons in Oregon and Utah to just over 1.8 percent of persons in New York. Even when comparing the number of recipients to the number of persons in poverty, GA programs assist only a portion of those in need. For instance, in New York, GA program recipients represent only about 11 percent of those living in poverty.

How Stable Has GA Been Over the Last Four Years?

In real terms, benefit levels have decreased over the past four years. Only eight states enacted benefit increases, although none of these increases exceeded inflation. Six states reduced benefit levels. In one of these states, California, the state gave counties the right to seek state mandate relief by reducing GA benefit levels. (The California county surveyed for this report, Los Angeles County, responded by lowering benefits by about 25 percent for individuals in 1996.) The remaining states, two-thirds of those with GA programs, have held constant benefit levels set during or prior to 1992.

Other recent trends point to continued contraction of GA programs. In January 1996 Wisconsin replaced its state required county-based GA program with a block grant under which counties can choose whether to have a program. Several Wisconsin counties have chosen not to provide GA, some have narrowed the populations eligible for assistance, and some now provide only medical assistance. In addition, Montana eliminated the state-run GA program that was administered in 12 of its 56 counties, although some counties continue to administer their own programs.

Other states have recently eliminated assistance for certain categories of individuals. Connecticut, Hawaii, Minnesota, Ohio, and Pennsylvania eliminated benefits for able-bodied employable individuals without children. Pennsylvania eliminated benefits for families as well. Except for persons no longer eligible for GA in Ohio, a portion of persons losing eligibility for cash assistance may continue to be eligible for medical assistance. Arizona and Rhode Island eliminated benefits for pregnant women. Four states tightened the eligibility criteria for persons with disabilities (Arizona, Florida, Oregon, and Rhode Island), and three states (Arizona, Hawaii, and New Mexico) decreased the duration for which benefits are available to disabled recipients. In addition, Vermont tightened eligibility criteria for able-bodied employable individuals without children. It is necessary to watch these patterns and to determine if they continue in the face of significant changes in federal welfare programs.

CHAPTER 2: GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS, ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL, AND FUNDING SOURCES

General Assistance (GA) programs vary widely throughout the country. Although 42 states have GA programs in at least some localities, these states differ in respect to GA program requirements, administration, and funding sources. This chapter provides a general overview of GA program requirements, administration, and funding, which are detailed in Table 2.1.

For the purposes of this report, we define General Assistance programs as cash or in-kind assistance programs that are funded solely with state, county, or local funds (or a combination of these) and are designed to meet the needs of persons ineligible for federally funded cash assistance programs. This definition includes interim assistance programs available for persons waiting to become eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Although several states also have state-funded emergency assistance programs that typically consist of a one-time grant, we limit our definition to programs providing assistance on a more ongoing basis.

States with GA Programs Throughout the State

Figure 1.1 summarizes the variation in GA programs across the country. GA programs exist throughout 33 states. Twenty-five of these programs have uniform eligibility rules across the state.³ In addition, benefit schedules are primarily uniform within these states, although some states set benefit amounts that vary by the cost of living in different areas of the state. Typically, the state provides the administrative control and funding for these programs, and the same office that administers AFDC usually also administers GA.

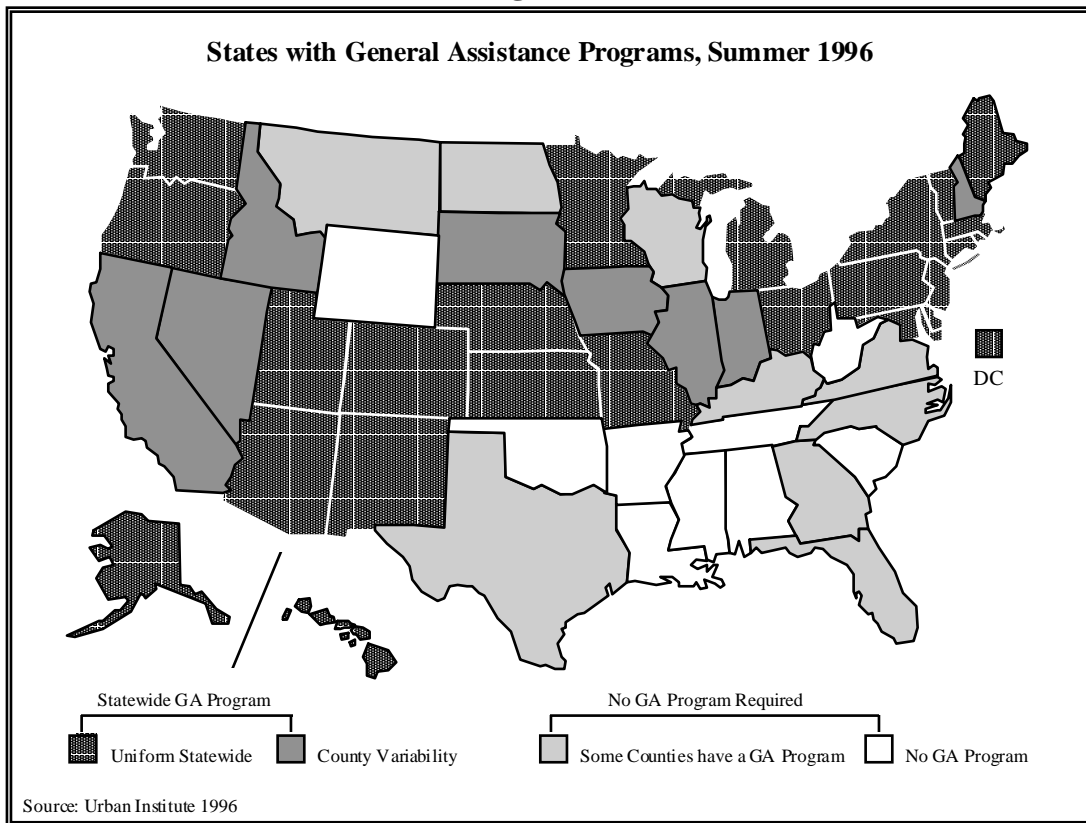
The remaining eight states with statewide programs have eligibility rules and benefit schedules that vary by county or locality.⁴ Although these states require each county or locality to provide for its needy residents through a GA program, specific GA eligibility rules, benefit

3. The following states have statewide GA programs with uniform eligibility rules across the state: Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, and Washington.

4. The following states mandate that each county or locality provide GA: California, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, and South Dakota.

levels, administrative control, and funding are left largely to the county/locality. However, in California and New Hampshire, the state provides guidelines or basic requirements for the counties or towns to follow in developing their GA programs.

Figure 2.1



States That Do Not Require a GA Program

Eighteen states do not mandate a GA program. In nine of these states, some towns or counties have chosen to run their own GA program.⁵ These localities tend to be in the larger, more urban areas of the state. Programs vary widely from one county to the next. In Virginia and Wisconsin, localities choosing to run a GA program must operate it within flexible state

5. The following states have a GA program in some counties or localities only: Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

guidelines, and funding occurs jointly through the state and county/locality. All other county-based programs are solely county-funded and are not subject to any state constraints. The remaining nine states have no GA program.⁶ As indicated by Figure 2.1, most states without GA programs 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, Direct Assistance Service, Direct Financial Assistance, City Welfare, and Home Relief. Some program names specify who is eligible for assistance such as Aid to the Needy Disabled, Disability Assistance, Family and Children Assistance, and Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children. 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 term General Assistance to include all of these programs.

6. The following states have no GA program: Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

Table 2.1: General Assistance Program Requirements, Administration, and Funding
(Summer 1996)

State	State Program Name	State Program Requirements	Administrative Control	Funding Source
Alabama		No GA Program		
Alaska	1. General Relief Assistance ¹ 2. Interim Assistance	Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
Arizona	General Assistance	Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
Arkansas		No GA Program		
California	General Relief	State requires counties to provide General Relief programs. The state maintains policy control, decides program scope and sets basic benefit levels. The counties set specific benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State/County	County
Colorado	1. Aid to the Needy Disabled 2. Other GA Programs	1. Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules. 2. No state requirements. Only about six counties have GA programs. The City and County of Denver has the largest program.	1. State/County 2. County	1. State/County 2. County
Connecticut	General Assistance	Uniform statewide eligibility rules; benefits for families vary by living costs in three regions of the state.	State/Local	State/Local
Delaware	General Assistance	Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
District of Columbia	1. General Public Assistance (GPA) ² 2. General Public Assistance for Children (GC)	Uniform district-wide benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	District	District
Florida	No Statewide GA Program	No state requirements. Most counties do not have GA programs. Metro-Dade County runs Direct Financial Assistance (includes short-term assistance and interim assistance)	County	County

Table 2.1: General Assistance Program Requirements, Administration, and Funding (cont.)

State	State Program Name	State Program Requirements	Administrative Control	Funding Source
Georgia	No Statewide GA Program	No state requirements. Most counties do not have GA programs. Fulton County has a General Assistance program.	County	County
Hawaii	General Assistance	Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
Idaho	General Assistance	State code mandates that counties provide for the necessities of life and necessary medical services, and that the county be the resource of last resort. Counties set specific benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	County	County
Illinois	1. State Transitional Assistance 2. Family and Children Assistance	State requires all local units to have GA programs. ³ The City of Chicago and all other local units which receive state funds (approx. 60) 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 (approx. 1,400), establish their standards and policies locally.	City of Chicago: State Localities receiving state funds: State/Local All other localities: Local	City of Chicago and approximately 60 other localities: State/Local All other localities: Local
Indiana	Poor Relief	State requires township trustees to provide for persons in need. Eligibility rules and benefit schedule are left to local discretion.	Local	County
Iowa	General Relief	State law requires each county to have a GA program. Program design, benefit schedule, and eligibility rules are determined by each county.	County	County
Kansas	General Assistance	Uniform statewide eligibility rules. Benefit schedules differ by region depending on costs of living.	State	State
Kentucky	No Statewide GA Program	No state requirements. Only two counties - Jefferson and Fayette - have programs. Jefferson County runs Emergency Financial Assistance.	County	County
Louisiana	No GA program			

Table 2.1: General Assistance Program Requirements, Administration, and Funding (cont.)

State	State Program Name	State Program Requirements	Administrative Control	Funding Source
Maine	General Assistance	State law requires that municipalities have ordinances to govern their general assistance programs. However, ninety-five percent of towns have adopted a standard ordinance developed by the Maine Municipal Association, and eligibility rules are similar in most localities. Benefit schedules vary based on local costs.	State/Local	State/Local
Maryland	1. Transitional Emergency, Medical, and Housing Assistance (TEMHA) 2. GA for Pregnant Women	Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
Massachusetts	Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC)	Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
Michigan	1. State Disability Assistance (SDA) 2. State Family Assistance (SFA)	1. Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules. 2. Uniform statewide eligibility rules; benefits vary by region in accordance with differences in housing costs.	State	State
Minnesota	General Assistance	Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State/County	State
Mississippi		No GA Program		
Missouri	General Relief	Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
Montana	No Statewide GA Program	No state requirements. Some counties have general assistance programs. Yellowstone County runs General Relief.	County	County

Table 2.1: General Assistance Program Requirements, Administration, and Funding (cont.)

State	State Program Name	State Program Requirements	Administrative Control	Funding Source
Nebraska	1. State Disability Program (SDP) 2. County General Assistance	1. Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules. 2. State law requires counties to define how the needs of persons not eligible for other assistance programs will be met. 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.	1. State 2. State/County	1. State 2. State/County
Nevada	Direct Assistance Service (DAS)	State law mandates that counties provide Direct Assistance Services. Benefits and eligibility rules are determined by each county. Clark County has 70% of the state's population and the most extensive GA program.	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/Local	Local
New Jersey	General Assistance	Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State/Local	State/Local
New Mexico	General Assistance	Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
New York	Home Relief	Eligibility rules and benefit schedules vary by county depending upon shelter and heating costs.	State/County	State/County
North Carolina	No Statewide GA Program	No state requirements. Some counties have GA programs. Durham County runs Emergency Assistance.	County	County
North Dakota	No Statewide GA Program	No state requirements. Cass County runs a General Assistance program.	County	County
Ohio	Disability Assistance	Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State/County	State/County
Oklahoma		No GA Program		
Oregon	General Assistance	Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State

Table 2.1: General Assistance Program Requirements, Administration, and Funding (cont.)

State	State Program Name	State Program Requirements	Administrative Control	Funding Source
Pennsylvania	General Assistance	The state sets eligibility rules and benefit schedules that vary by living costs among four categories of counties.	State	State
Rhode Island	General Public Assistance	Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
South Carolina		No GA Program ⁴		
South Dakota	Poor Relief	State requires counties to provide relief for the poor. Eligibility rules and benefit schedules are determined by each county.	County	County
Tennessee		No GA Program ⁵		
Texas	No Statewide GA Program	No state requirements. Harris County runs a General Assistance program.	County	County
Utah	1. GA Self Sufficiency (GA-SS) 2. GA Working Toward Employment Program (GA-WTE)	Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
Vermont	General Assistance	Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules (except for Chittenden county, which has a higher housing maximum used in calculating benefits).	State	State
Virginia	General Relief	Localities may choose to provide a General Relief (GR) program. Those that provide a program must operate it within state guidelines. The guidelines offer a range of options from which localities may fashion a GR program that suits local needs.	State/Local	State/Local
Washington	General Assistance	Uniform statewide benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
West Virginia		No GA program ⁶		
Wisconsin	Relief Block Grant Program	Counties in Wisconsin can choose whether to have a General Relief program. Counties that use state funds for a nonmedical program must also have a medical program. ⁷ Benefit schedule and eligibility rules are set by each county.	State/County	State/County

Table 2.1: General Assistance Program Requirements, Administration, and Funding (cont.)

State	State Program Name	State Program Requirements	Administrative Control	Funding Source
Wyoming		No GA Program		

Source: Urban Institute 1996

1. Alaska. Sixty percent of General Relief Assistance expenditures cover destitute burials. Of the remaining budget, most is used to pay for rent and prevent eviction.
2. District of Columbia. General Public Assistance is an interim assistance program.
3. Illinois. In addition to Chicago, there are 1,455 local governmental units, of which two are cities, 17 are counties, and the remaining 1,436 are townships.
4. South Carolina. The state does have a program referred to as General Assistance. However, it provides one-time-only grants rather than ongoing assistance. The program served only two persons in 1995.
5. Tennessee. Some counties do have emergency assistance-type programs.
6. West Virginia. The state does have an Emergency Assistance Program which provides a one-time grant (available only once a year) to needy persons or families to assist in paying medical needs, rent, food, clothing, fuel, utilities, etc.
7. Wisconsin. Milwaukee County is prohibited by state statute from having a nonmedical program.

CHAPTER 3: GENERAL ASSISTANCE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Each General Assistance program sets eligibility criteria and program requirements to target the particular populations considered most in need of assistance. Generally, these are low-income persons or families who are ineligible for federally funded cash assistance programs. Although some programs have flexible eligibility rules, most programs have a fixed set of requirements. This chapter summarizes the various eligibility rules and describes how they vary across states.⁷

Eligibility rules can generally be divided into five classifications: (1) categorical eligibility requirements, which limit benefits to certain types of persons; (2) financial eligibility requirements, which define financially needy; (3) citizenship and residency requirements; (4) drug screening and treatment requirements; and (5) work requirements. In addition, several states have a variety of other requirements such as requiring temporarily disabled persons to participate in vocational rehabilitation or requiring all recipients to have a social security number. Finally, all of the states expect or explicitly require General Assistance applicants to apply for any related federal benefits for which they are eligible.

Categorical Eligibility Requirements

Categorical eligibility requirements restrict eligibility to specific categories of individuals or families. Generally, this includes low-income persons who do not meet the categorical eligibility requirements for federal cash assistance or who are involved in the sometimes lengthy process of applying for federal assistance. Of the 42 states with general assistance programs, 30 have some set of categorical eligibility requirements. The remaining 12 states provide assistance to all categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.

States that limit assistance to certain categories of eligible persons generally define eligibility according to family status and/or employability of the recipient: (1) disabled, elderly,

7. When making inter-state comparisons, we use the term "state" regardless of whether a state has a uniform statewide GA program or a GA program only in particular counties or localities. In addition, we use the term "program" to refer collectively to all of a state's GA programs.

and other unemployable adults; (2) children and families with children; and (3) employable adults without children. Table 3.1 contains detailed state-by-state descriptions of categorical eligibility requirements delimited by these three categories of eligibility. More general descriptions of the various categories are presented below. Although these general descriptions may not capture the particular nuances of each state's requirements, the simplification and generalization of these categories facilitate inter-state comparisons.

Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons. Each of the 42 states with GA programs provide assistance to at least a portion of persons who are disabled, elderly, or otherwise unemployable, including all 30 with categorical eligibility requirements and 12 without. The states differ, however, with respect to the extensiveness of the sub-categories they include, as well as by their exact specification. In addition, states may have contrasting definitions of “unemployable” persons. For instance, although both Connecticut and Vermont provide assistance to elderly persons over age 55, Connecticut considers all such persons unemployable, while Vermont considers some of them employable and subjects them to work requirements. Generally, eligible sub-categories include:

- *Persons with a permanent disability.* All 42 states with GA programs offer assistance to persons who meet the Social Security Administration's definition of disabled (i.e., persons with a medically verified disability--physical or mental--which is expected to last for at least 12 months or to result in death, and which is severe enough to prevent the individual from engaging in “substantial gainful activity”). This group includes persons who may be eligible for SSI and are awaiting SSI eligibility determination. Because it sometimes takes 12 or more months to determine SSI 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 SSI payment retroactive to the application date. States may require that this payment be used to repay the state for any interim assistance received. In addition to persons awaiting SSI determination, some states provide assistance to those who have a permanent disability as defined by the state but who do not qualify for SSI. Other states end assistance once all SSI appeals have been exhausted.
- *Persons with a temporary disability.* To a lesser degree, states with categorical eligibility requirements also offer assistance to 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 reasons, 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. In other states, persons 55 to 65 may still be eligible, but are classified as “employable” persons subject to work requirements.
- *Caretakers of an incapacitated spouse or child.* A smaller number of states explicitly identify caretakers as a category of persons eligible for GA. These are persons who are unable to engage in work activity because of time commitments to 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” due to current enrollment 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 sub-category.

Children/Families with Children. Thirty-one of the 42 states with GA programs (19 with categorical eligibility requirements, 12 with no categorical eligibility requirements) provide assistance to low-income children or families with children. States providing categorical eligibility for children or families with children generally include some or all of the following sub-categories:

- *Families with children.* Most often mentioned by states that provide GA to children and families with children, this category usually consists of two-parent “intact” families that meet the state's income and asset limits but are not eligible for AFDC. Often this is due to the principal wage earner not meeting the state's work history or hours requirements. Some states also provide limited assistance to families that are currently receiving AFDC, but usually only in emergency situations.

- *Pregnant women in first two trimesters.* Under AFDC program rules, states have the option of defining AFDC eligibility to include women pregnant with their first child in the final trimester of pregnancy. In addition to electing this option, a few states identify pregnant women in their first two trimesters as eligible for GA.
- *Unattached children.* A number of states explicitly identify unattached children as eligible for GA. This includes children who are ineligible for AFDC because they live with an adult who is not a parent or caretaker relative as specified in federal regulations or state provisions.
- *Emancipated minors.* A few states also provide GA to low-income persons commonly referred to as emancipated minors. These are minors, generally between the ages of 16 and 18, who no longer live with a parent, and, thus are not eligible for AFDC.

Employable Adults Without Children. Sixteen of the 42 states with GA programs (4 with categorical eligibility requirements, 12 without requirements) provide assistance to employable adults without children. This category generally consists of able-bodied persons who the state deems able to find employment on their own or with some help provided by the state. States that provide assistance to this category of persons usually provide assistance to at least some persons in the previous two categories as well. New Jersey and Utah, the only exceptions, provide assistance to both employable and unemployable individuals, but not to families. Sub-categories in the able-bodied adults without children category include:

- *All employable adults.* Generally, this group includes able-bodied employable adults between 18 and 65. Only one state that has categorical eligibility requirements provides GA to persons in this category (New Jersey).
- *Able-bodied adults with some barriers to employment.* Three of the states with categorical eligibility requirements that provide assistance to employable adults limit eligibility to those able-bodied persons who have some barriers to employment, such as lack of education or inability to speak English (Connecticut, Utah, and Vermont).

Financial Eligibility Requirements

All states consider the financial status of the applicant by assessing the applicant's income and assets. Each state sets specific income and/or asset limits. These are usually calculated after

deducting or exempting certain income or assets. Table 3.2 provides a detailed listing of state financial eligibility requirements.

Most states vary income limits according to the type of applicant. In states where couples and families may apply for benefits, income limits vary according to family size. To a lesser extent, statewide programs vary income limits according to location of residence, with higher limits in places with higher costs of living. As shown in Table 3.2, states may also vary income by the living arrangements of the applicant or by the eligibility category of the applicant. In contrast to income limits, asset limits typically do not vary by family size or eligibility category.

Across states, income and asset limits vary considerably. In three states (Florida, Kentucky, and New Hampshire), only those who have no income at all are eligible for benefits. In contrast, Hawaii's program has the most generous income limits, and awards financial eligibility to individuals who have a monthly income up to \$1,239 and to families of three with a monthly income up to \$2,109. Several states set asset limits at zero. The majority of states, however, model the asset limits after the AFDC and SSI programs (allowing \$1,000-\$2,000 in assets).

States usually exempt certain types of income and assets when determining the applicant's income and asset level. Income exemptions may include all or certain types of unearned income, a portion of earned income, or some combination of the two. Unearned income generally includes a wide range of federally provided income 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. Asset exemptions typically include a home and/or auto. States often model both income and asset exemptions after the AFDC or SSI exemptions.

Citizenship and Residency Requirements

Most GA programs also set citizenship and residency criteria (Table 3.3). Thirty-six states explicitly restrict eligibility to U.S. citizens or legal aliens. Typically, these states follow AFDC or SSI program rules when determining which categories of aliens are eligible for assistance. These categories include aliens who are lawfully admitted for permanent residency (e.g., "immigrants" or green card holders) or legally present on a permanent basis (e.g., refugees).

Excluded categories include undocumented, or illegal, aliens, temporary aliens (e.g., tourists and students), and some smaller categories of aliens.⁸ Three states (Idaho, New York, and North Carolina) have no citizenship requirements; the District of Columbia and Minnesota have no citizenship requirements for persons under age 18, and Maine requires citizenship or legal alien status of its able-bodied applicants only.⁹

Nearly all programs include residency requirements. State programs require applicants to currently reside in the state, and county programs require residence in the county or local municipality where they are applying for benefits. Often these are accompanied by a requirement for a written or verbal indication of an intent to remain in the state, county, or local municipality. In addition, seven programs include a durational residency requirement. These specify an amount of time ranging from 15 days to 9 months for which applicants must prove residency prior to receiving benefits.

Drug Screening and Treatment Requirements

None of the 42 states with a GA program currently includes drug screening as a requirement for eligibility (Table 3.3). Two states, however, have drug screening requirements pending. Colorado will test all applicants for drug use starting January 1, 1997, and Los Angeles County is developing a drug screening program that may begin as early as January 1, 1997. In addition, seven states require drug or alcohol abuse treatment if the applicant or recipient is found to be drug- or alcohol-dependent. 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. Assistance is then provided on the condition that the recipient continues to receive treatment, usually in a state-sponsored or -licensed treatment

8. For more information, see U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service. "Alien Eligibility for Federal Assistance." CRS Report for Congress 94-73 EPW, by Larry M. Eig and Joyce C. Vialet. Washington, D.C. Feb. 2, 1994.

9. States that currently provide benefits to illegal aliens may soon be required to limit benefits to citizens and legal aliens only. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, enacted on August 22, 1996, bars states from providing benefits to illegal aliens. States must pass a law to make illegal aliens eligible for benefits.

facility. Often payments to these recipients are made only 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. Twenty-one states have some type of work program requirement (see Table 3.4).

Generally, work requirements are found only in those states that provide assistance to families with children or employable adults without children, although not all of these states impose work requirements. 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, students, and persons already employed.

The types of work requirements and programs vary by state. Although nine states provide some opportunities for job training, counseling, or education, the emphasis in most states is on finding a job or "working off" the benefit amount through public sector employment. In addition, many GA recipients are also receiving Food Stamps and are, thus, subject to Food Stamp work requirements. However, only ten of the programs with work requirements coordinate their requirements with Food Stamp work programs.

Table 3.1: General Assistance Categories of Eligibility
(Summer 1996)

State	Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons	Children/Families with Children	Employable Adults without Children
Alabama	No GA Program		
Alaska 1. General Relief Assistance 2. Interim Assistance	1. All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs. 2. Persons over age 18 awaiting SSI determination who are either blind, disabled, or aged. Persons at least 18 years old who are disabled for at least 12 months; caretakers of disabled individuals.	1. All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs. 2. Not eligible	1. All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs. 2. Not eligible
Arizona	Persons at least 18 years old who are disabled for at least 12 months; caretakers of disabled individuals.	Not eligible	Not eligible
Arkansas	No GA Program		
California Los Angeles County	All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.		
Colorado 1. Aid to the Needy Disabled (Statewide) 2. GA (City and County of Denver)	1. Persons who are disabled at least six months. 2. All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.	1. Not eligible 2. All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.	1. Not eligible 2. All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.
Connecticut	Persons unable to work for at least six months; caretakers of incapacitated spouse or child; persons age 55 or older who have not worked in the previous five years.	Families applying for AFDC; unattached children.	Persons who are employable but not "job ready" due to: substance abuse; domestic violence or traumatic event; homelessness, lack of transportation, and non-English speaking; or short-term mental or physical disability.

Table 3.1: General Assistance Categories of Eligibility (cont.)

State	Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons	Children/Families with Children	Employable Adults without Children
Delaware	Persons who are ill, incapacitated, over age 55, or caretakers.	Intact families who do not qualify for AFDC; unattached children; emancipated minors who will graduate from high school within two years.	Not eligible
District of Columbia	Persons with disabilities awaiting SSI determination.	1. Not eligible 2. Unattached children	Not eligible
1. General Public Assistance 2. General Public Asst. for Children	2. Not eligible		
Florida Dade County	Persons with medical disabilities; families in which both or only parent(s) are disabled or one parent is disabled and the other is a caretaker.	Not eligible	Not eligible
Georgia Fulton County	Persons who are elderly or disabled.	Not eligible	Not eligible
Hawaii	Persons with a disability which precludes employment for at least 30 days.	Intact families with minor children who are not eligible for AFDC.	Not eligible
Idaho Ada County	All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.		
Illinois City of Chicago'	1. Unemployable persons ineligible for federally funded cash assistance programs including the disabled, elderly, caretakers, certain homeless persons, full-time high school students, and persons taking certain prescription drugs. 2. Not eligible	1. Not eligible 2. Families with minor children who are ineligible for AFDC; pregnant women in first two trimesters.	Not eligible
1. Transitional Assistance 2. Family and Children Assistance			

Table 3.1: General Assistance Categories of Eligibility (cont.)

State	Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons	Children/Families with Children	Employable Adults without Children
Indiana Center Township of Marion County	All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.		
Iowa Polk County	All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.		
Kansas	Disabled persons; caretakers.	Families ineligible for AFDC; pregnant women in first two trimesters; unattached children.	Not eligible
Kentucky Jefferson County	All categories of financially needy families and unemployable individuals who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.		
Louisiana	No GA Program		
Maine	All categories of needy people, including people who receive federal cash assistance.		
Maryland 1. Transitional Emergency, Medical, and Housing Assistance (TEMHA) 2. GA for Pregnant Women	1. Persons with a medical disability which precludes employment for at least 3 months. 2. Not eligible	1. Not eligible 2. Pregnant women in first two trimesters.	1. Not eligible 2. Not eligible
Massachusetts	Persons disabled at least 60 days and ineligible for SSI; elderly persons over 65 ³ ; students under age 21 and in school or training program; caretakers.	Families ineligible for AFDC.	Not eligible

Table 3.1: General Assistance Categories of Eligibility (cont.)

State	Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons	Children/Families with Children	Employable Adults without Children
Michigan 1. State Disability Assistance 2. State Family Assistance	1. Persons who meet SSI criteria except that duration of disability need be only 90 days or longer. 2. Not eligible	1. Not eligible 2. Families ineligible for AFDC.	Not eligible
Minnesota	Elderly; persons with a mental or physical illness that is permanent or temporary; caretakers; women in battered women's shelters; persons with excessive travel time to job; 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.	Families ineligible for AFDC; pregnant women in first two trimesters; unattached children; emancipated minors.	Not eligible
Mississippi	No GA Program		
Missouri	Persons with temporary disability expected to last at least 90 days; persons with a permanent disability awaiting SSI determination; caretakers.	Emancipated minors.	Not eligible
Montana Yellowstone County	Disabled or elderly persons.	Not eligible ⁴	Not eligible
Nebraska 1. State Disability Program 2. County General Assistance ⁵	1. Persons with a disability expected to last at least 6 months. 2. All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.	1. Not eligible 2. All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.	1. Not eligible 2. All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.

Table 3.1: General Assistance Categories of Eligibility (cont.)

State	Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons	Children/Families with Children	Employable Adults without Children
Nevada Clark County	All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.		
New Hampshire City of Manchester	All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.		
New Jersey	Unemployable persons at least 18 years old due to temporary or permanent disability.	Emancipated minors at least 16 years old.	Employable persons at least 18 years old.
New Mexico	Persons with a temporary or permanent disability.	Unattached children.	Not eligible
New York	All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.		
North Carolina Durham County	Persons disabled for at least 30 days. ⁶	Not eligible	Not eligible
North Dakota Cass County	Disabled persons awaiting SSI determination.	Not eligible ⁷	Not eligible
Ohio	Persons disabled for at least nine months; persons aged 60 or older; persons residing in a treatment center certified by the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services.	Families with minor children not eligible for AFDC; pregnant women in first two trimesters, unattached children.	Not eligible ⁸
Oklahoma	No GA Program		
Oregon	Disabled persons awaiting SSI determination.	Not eligible	Not eligible

Table 3.1: General Assistance Categories of Eligibility (cont.)

State	Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons	Children/Families with Children	Employable Adults without Children
Pennsylvania	Persons with a temporary or permanent disability; persons with active participation in a drug or alcohol program which precludes employment; caretaker of disabled person, if the caretaker is deemed needed; victims of domestic violence; and persons taking health-sustaining medication.	Not eligible	Not eligible
Rhode Island	Disabled persons awaiting SSI determination. ⁹	Families not eligible for AFDC.	Not eligible
South Carolina	No GA Program		
South Dakota Minnehaha County	All categories of financially needy people who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.		
Tennessee	No GA Program		
Texas Harris County	Persons with a temporary or permanent disability; families in which both or only parent(s) are disabled or one parent is disabled and the other is a caretaker.	Not eligible	Not eligible
Utah 1. GA-Self Sufficiency 2. GA-Working Towards Employment (WTE)	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	Not eligible ¹⁰	1. Not eligible 2. Able-bodied single adults or married couples who lack skills for employment.

Table 3.1: General Assistance Categories of Eligibility (cont.)

State	Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons	Children/Families with Children	Employable Adults without Children
Vermont	Persons disabled for at least 30 days; elderly individuals.	Families with children.	Able-bodied adults with two of the following barriers to employment: over age 55, eighth-grade education or can't read or write, has been employed fewer than six months in the last 5 years and has been a full-time student less than six months in the last five years, released from a mental health institution in the past six months, or in a drug treatment program for no more than 36 months.
Virginia Fairfax County	Persons awaiting SSI determination; persons ineligible for SSI or AFDC and unemployable for at least 30 days due to disability, age or lack of training, illness in the family, or home responsibilities; persons in institutional care.	Unattached children; emancipated minors.	Not eligible
Washington	Unemployable persons due to a permanent disability or a temporary disability which prevents work for at least 90 days.	Pregnant women in first two trimesters; unattached children living with a guardian.	Not eligible
West Virginia	No GA Program		
Wisconsin Dane County	Persons under age 65 who are unemployable due to a temporary or permanent disability.	Not eligible	Not eligible
Wyoming	No GA program		

Source: Urban Institute 1996

1. Illinois, Chicago. Information for Chicago is representative of the approximately 60 other local entities that receive state funds.
2. Kentucky, Jefferson County. Employable persons are eligible for assistance only one time each year. For the purpose of this survey, we consider this to be Emergency Assistance, not General Assistance.

Table 3.1: General Assistance Categories of Eligibility (cont.)

3. Massachusetts. Officially these recipients are awaiting SSI determination. In reality, most of these recipients are sponsored legal aliens who are not yet eligible for SSI.
4. Montana, Yellowstone County. Although technically, families not eligible for AFDC are eligible for General Relief, it has been two years since any family has met the eligibility requirements.
5. Nebraska. Information represents the guidelines developed by the Nebraska Association of County Officials and the 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.
6. North Carolina. Elderly persons who have minor children in the home may be eligible for a one-month grant. For the purpose of this survey, we consider this to be Emergency Assistance, not General Assistance.
7. North Dakota, Cass County. Families (with or without children) in financial crisis due to fire or other natural disaster are eligible for one month's rent.
8. Ohio. Able-bodied adults who are medication dependent may receive medical benefits only.
9. Rhode Island. Persons with a temporary disability are automatically eligible for medical assistance and may receive an assistance grant for 1 to 2 months. Cash assistance for those with a temporary disability is made on a case by case basis dependent upon the applicant's hardship and statement of need. It is not an entitlement and no appeals are accepted.
10. Utah. Some families may be receiving benefits from the GA-WTE program, but only very few (an average caseload of two per month). Families who were eligible for GA-WTE are now eligible for a program operating under an AFDC waiver. Those families still receiving benefits from GA-WTE constitute the waiver control group.

Table 3.2: General Assistance Financial Eligibility Criteria
(Summer 1996)

State	Monthly Income Eligibility Limits			Asset Limits	
	One Person	Three Persons	Income Exemptions ¹	Asset Limit	Asset Exemptions ²
Alabama			No GA Program		
Alaska 1. General Relief Assistance 2. Interim Assistance	1. \$300 2. Applicants: \$470 Recipients: \$873	1. \$500 2. NA	1. None 2. \$20 disregard, \$65 earned income plus half of remaining, in-kind support, Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend ³	1. \$500 2. \$2,000	1. Home, auto 2. Home, \$4,500 auto
Arizona	\$173 if paying rent \$108 if not paying rent	NA	\$24/month for employment-related expenses	\$1,000	\$50,000 home, \$1,200 auto
Arkansas			No GA Program		
California Los Angeles County	Applicants: \$221 Employed Recipients: \$611 Unemployed Recipients: \$221 ⁴	Applicants: \$431 Employed Recipients: \$831 Unemployed Recipients: \$431	None	Individual applicant: \$50 Family of 3 applicants: \$100 Recipients: \$1,500	\$34,000 real property, \$4,500 auto
Colorado 1. Aid to the Needy Disabled (Statewide) 2. GA (City and County of Denver)	1. \$229 2. \$806 ⁵	1. NA 2. \$1,352	1. None 2. None	1. \$2,000 2. \$0	1. Real property in use, auto 2. Auto
Connecticut	\$350 unemployable \$300 employable, not-job-ready ⁶	\$543 ⁷	\$150/month gross wages	\$250/person, up to \$1,000 total	Home, \$1,500 auto (\$4,500 auto if disabled)

Table 3.2: General Assistance Financial Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

State	Monthly Income Eligibility Limits			Income Exemptions ¹		Asset Limits	
	One Person	Three Persons			Asset Limit	Asset Exemptions ²	
Delaware	\$123	\$224		\$50 earned income	\$1,000	Home, \$1,500 auto	
District of Columbia	\$262	NA		Persons with full-time employment: \$65.50; persons with part-time employment: \$51.50	\$2,000	Home, \$1,500 auto	
Florida Dade County	\$0	\$0		Training allowance, including tuition, transportation and lunch	\$0	Home, auto	
Georgia Fulton County	\$225	NA		None	\$400	\$1,000 auto	
Hawaii	\$1,239	\$2,109		\$30 earned income per month for 12 months plus 1/3 of income for 4 consecutive months, \$90 work expenses, \$175-\$200 child care expenses, EITC income, \$50 child support payment	\$1,000	Home, \$1,500 auto	
Idaho Ada County	Determined on a case by case basis ⁸			None	\$0	Home, auto	
Illinois City of Chicago ⁹	1. \$75 2. NA	1. NA 2. \$90		1. \$361 earned income per month for 3 months out of 12. 2. \$175-\$200 child care expenses.	One month's payment level. (If homeless: \$1,000.)	Home, \$1,500 auto	
1. Transitional Assistance 2. Family and Children Assistance							

Table 3.2: General Assistance Financial Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

State	Monthly Income Eligibility Limits			Asset Limits	
	One Person	Three Persons	Income Exemptions ¹	Asset Limit	Asset Exemptions ²
Indiana Center Township of Marion County	\$342 ¹⁰	\$577	None	\$0	Home, auto
Iowa Polk County	\$343	\$426	Exemptions may be granted on a case by case basis.	Determined on a case by case basis; only liquid assets are considered.	
Kansas	\$196 ¹¹	\$403 ¹²	\$30 earned income per month for 12 months plus 1/3 of income for four consecutive months, \$90 work expenses, \$175-\$200 child care expenses, EITC income, \$50 child support payment	\$1,000	Home, \$1,500 auto
Kentucky Jefferson County	\$0	\$0	None	Determined on a case by case basis	
Louisiana			No GA Program		
Maine	Varies by county. Average: \$353	Varies by county. Average: \$556	Travel and child care expenses for work or job search	Liquid assets are considered as income	Home, \$5,000 auto (unless public transportation is sufficient)

Table 3.2: General Assistance Financial Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

State	Monthly Income Eligibility Limits			Asset Limits	
	One Person	Three Persons	Income Exemptions ¹	Asset Limit	Asset Exemptions ²
Maryland 1. Transitional Emergency, Medical, and Housing Assistance (TEMHA) 2. GA for Pregnant Women	1. \$0 in earned income; \$157 in unearned income 2. \$125	1. NA 2. NA	1. None 2. \$30 earned income per month for 12 months plus 1/3 of income for four consecutive months, \$90 work expenses, \$175-\$200 child care expenses, EITC income, \$50 child support payment	1. \$1,500 2. \$1,000	1. Home, auto 2. Home, auto
Massachusetts	\$304 in public housing \$339 in private housing	\$487 in public housing \$522 in private housing	\$90 earned income; \$90 work expenses	\$250 individual \$500 family	Home, \$1,500 auto
Michigan 1. State Disability Assistance 2. State Family Assistance	1. \$296 (other benefit maximums apply if recipient is in residential care unit) 2. NA	1. NA 2. Varies by region from \$509 to \$587	\$200 plus 20% of remaining earned income per month per person	\$1,000	Home, \$1,500 auto
Minnesota	No limit on gross income; \$203 net income	\$984 gross income \$532 net income	None	\$1000	Home, auto for employment needs
Mississippi			No GA Program		
Missouri	\$181 (of which no more than \$80 can be earned income)	NA	Irregular or unpredictable income	\$999.99 individual \$2,000 family of 3	Home

Table 3.2: General Assistance Financial Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

State	Monthly Income Eligibility Limits			Asset Limits	
	One Person	Three Persons	Income Exemptions ¹	Asset Limit	Asset Exemptions ²
Montana Yellowstone County	\$261	NA ³	None	Assets count against income eligibility limit	Home, \$1,500 auto
Nebraska 1. State Disability Program 2. County General Assistance ⁴	1. \$645 2. \$225	1. NA 1. \$350	1. \$20 disregard, \$65 earned income plus half of remaining earnings 2. Reasonable self-employment expenses, \$40 work transportation allowance	1. \$2,000 2. Assets count against income eligibility limit	1. Home, \$4,500 auto 2. \$5,000 home, \$1,500 auto
Nevada Clark County	\$277	\$466	None	\$0	Home, auto
New Hampshire City of Manchester	\$0	\$0	None	\$0	Home, auto for medical or employment needs
New Jersey	Employable: \$140 Unemployable: \$210	NA	First \$60 of earned income. If income after the \$60 disregard is less than the grant entitlement, then 1/3 of the remaining earned income is disregarded.	Applicants: \$0 Recipients: 3 times benefit	Home, \$500 auto or auto for medical or employment needs

Table 3.2: General Assistance Financial Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

State	Monthly Income Eligibility Limits			Asset Limits	
	One Person	Three Persons	Income Exemptions ¹	Asset Limit	Asset Exemptions ²
New Mexico	\$231	\$389	\$30 earned income per month for 12 months plus 1/3 of income for four consecutive months, \$90 work expenses, \$175-\$200 child care expenses, EITC income, \$50 child support payment	\$1,000	Home, \$1,500 auto
New York	\$352 (Values for New York City. Amount varies by county.)	\$577 (Values for New York City. Amount varies by county.)	\$90 work expenses. For families with children under 20: \$30 earned income per month for 12 months plus 1/3 of income for 4 consecutive months, child care expenses.	\$1,000	Home, \$1,500 auto
North Carolina Durham County	\$422	NA	None	\$0	Determined on a case by case basis
North Dakota Cass County	\$287 (\$337 if rent includes heat)	\$570 (\$620 if rent includes heat)	None	\$300	Home
Ohio	\$115	\$193	\$250 of earned income per month plus 1/2 of the remainder	\$1,000	Home, \$4,600 auto
Oklahoma			No GA Program		

Table 3.2: General Assistance Financial Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

State	Monthly Income Eligibility Limits			Asset Limits	
	One Person	Three Persons	Income Exemptions ¹	Asset Limit	Asset Exemptions ²
Oregon	\$286	NA	None	\$1,500 in total resources, of which no more than \$50 can be in cash or other liquid assets	None
Pennsylvania	\$215 ^{1,5}	\$421	None	\$250 individual \$1,000 family of 3	Home, auto for medical or employment needs
Rhode Island	Disabled adults: \$200 Others: \$327	\$554	\$20 disregard, \$65 earned income plus half of remaining earnings	\$400	Home, \$1,500 auto
South Carolina			No GA Program		
South Dakota Minnehaha County	\$552	\$928	None	\$0 liquid assets; \$2,000 non-liquid assets for an individual, \$4,000 non-liquid assets for a family.	\$30,000 home, auto
Tennessee			No GA program		
Texas Harris County	\$0 earned or AFDC/SSI income; \$109.50 other unearned income	\$0 earned or AFDC/SSI income; \$201 other unearned income	None	Individual: \$27 Family of three: \$50	Auto for special needs
Utah	\$246	NA	\$90 earned income	\$1,000	\$1,500 auto
Vermont	Catastrophic need: no limit. Other cases: \$436 in Chittenden County, \$396 in rest of the state.	Catastrophic need: no limit. Other cases: \$636 in Chittenden County, \$597 in rest of the state.	PASS plan money	\$1,500 for elderly or disabled people; \$2,250 for elderly or disabled couples. For all others, assets count toward income limits.	Home, auto

Table 3.2: General Assistance Financial Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

State	Monthly Income Eligibility Limits			Asset Limits	
	One Person	Three Persons	Income Exemptions ¹	Asset Limit	Asset Exemptions ²
Virginia Fairfax County	\$220	\$354	None	\$1,000	Auto
Washington	Unemployable: \$339 Pregnant woman or child with guardian: \$349	Children with guardian: \$546	\$30 earned income per month for 12 months plus 1/3 of income for four consecutive months, \$90 work expenses, \$175-\$200 child care expenses, EITC income, \$50 child support payment	\$1,000	Home, \$1,500 auto
West Virginia			No GA Program		
Wisconsin Dane County	\$247	\$517	None	\$300	Home, auto
Wyoming			No GA Program		

Source: Urban Institute 1996

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Alaska. The Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend is a share of the state's oil profits which are distributed annually to state residents.
4. Los Angeles County, California. Income limits for recipients may be lower depending on living arrangements.
5. Colorado, County of Denver. Income limits reflect 125% of the poverty level.
6. Connecticut. \$300 income limit and benefit level applies to employable, not-job-ready persons living alone. Levels are \$250 if applicant lives in shared housing, \$150 if applicant lives with relatives.

Table 3.2: General Assistance Financial Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

7. Connecticut. Income limits and benefit levels for families of three vary according to living costs in three regions of the state. Approximately 90% of the caseload resides in Region B, where the income limit and benefit level are \$543.
8. Idaho, Ada County. Eligibility is determined by comparing income to expenses for necessities of life. Applicants are expected to use all current and potential resources before seeking county assistance.
9. Illinois, City of Chicago. Information for Chicago is representative of the approximately 60 other local entities that receive state funds.
10. Indiana, Center Township of Marion County. Income limits reflect 55% of the federal poverty level.
11. Kansas. Income limits reflect 80% of the AFDC income limit, which varies by the cost of living in each county. Income limits shown apply to 70-80 percent of recipients. Income limits are reduced if recipient is in a shared residence.
12. Kansas. Income limits reflect 100% of the AFDC income limit, which varies by the cost of living in each county. Income limits shown apply to 70-80 percent of recipients. Income limits are reduced if recipient is in a shared residence.
13. Montana, Yellowstone County. Although technically, families not eligible for AFDC are eligible for General Relief, it has been two years since any family has met the eligibility requirements.
14. Nebraska. Information represents the guidelines developed by the Nebraska Association of County Officials and the 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.
15. Pennsylvania. Monthly income eligibility limits listed are for those counties in the highest cost of living category.

Table 3.3: Other General Assistance Eligibility Criteria
(Summer 1996)

State	Residency Requirement	Citizenship Requirement ¹	Drug Screening/Treatment	Work Requirement	Other Requirements
Alabama	No GA Program				
Alaska	1. State resident 2. State resident	1. Citizen, legal alien, or temporary alien 2. Citizen or legal alien ²	1. No 2. No	1. Yes 2. No	1. None 2. None
Arizona	State resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	No	None
Arkansas	No GA Program				
California Los Angeles County	County resident for at least 15 days	Citizen or legal alien ³	No	Yes	Applicants must not be fully employed
Colorado	1. State resident 2. County resident for at least 30 days ⁴	1. Citizen or legal alien 2. Citizen or legal alien	1. No ⁵ 2. No	1. No 2. No	1. Recipients must have applied for SSI. Vocational Rehabilitation and other referrals are made as appropriate. 2. None
Connecticut	State resident	Citizen or legal alien	No screening. Suspected drug users referred for evaluation. Drug addicted recipients must be in treatment or on waiting list to remain eligible.	Yes	None
Delaware	State resident	Citizen, legal alien, or unemployed refugee	No	No	None

Table 3.3: Other General Assistance Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

State	Residency Requirement	Citizenship Requirement ¹	Drug Screening/Treatment	Work Requirement	Other Requirements
District of Columbia 1. General Public Assistance 2. General Public Assistance for Children	District resident	1. Citizen or legal alien ^f 2. No citizenship requirement	No	No	None
Florida Dade County	County resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	No	Applicant's income must have been interrupted within the last 60 days and applicant must have been employed 12 of last 18 months.
Georgia Fulton County	County resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	No	None
Hawaii	State resident	Citizen, legal alien, or refugee after 8 months of refugee assistance	No screening. If recipients are eligible for GA because of their substance abuse, they are required to participate in a drug treatment program.	Yes	None
Idaho Ada County	County resident	No citizenship requirement	No	Yes	None
Illinois City of Chicago ⁷	State resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	Yes	Caretakers must provide proof of relationship to child or legal guardianship.

Table 3.3: Other General Assistance Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

State	Residency Requirement	Citizenship Requirement ¹	Drug Screening/Treatment	Work Requirement	Other Requirements
Indiana Center Township of Marion County	Township resident	Citizen or legal alien	No screening. Chemically dependent recipients must seek and maintain medical treatment.	Yes	None
Iowa Polk County	County resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	No	None
Kansas	State resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	Yes	None
Kentucky Jefferson County	County resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	No	None
Louisiana No GA Program					
Maine	State resident	Able-bodied recipients: Citizen or legal alien ⁸ Others: No citizenship requirement	No screening. No cost treatment required if addiction prevents work.	Yes	None
Maryland 1. Transitional Emergency, Medical, and Housing Assistance (TEMHA) 2. GA for Pregnant Women	State resident	Citizen or legal alien	No screening. Chemically dependent recipients must either participate in a drug treatment program or have their payments made to vendors or protective payee.	No	1. None 2. Pregnant women who are minors must reside with a caretaker relative or in a supervised setting.
Massachusetts	State resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	No	Caretakers are eligible only if the disabled person's monthly income is \$1,500 or less and assets are \$2,000 or less.

Table 3.3: Other General Assistance Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

State	Residency Requirement	Citizenship Requirement ¹	Drug Screening/Treatment	Work Requirement	Other Requirements
Michigan 1. State Disability Assistance 2. State Family Assistance	State resident	Citizen or legal alien	1. No screening. If substance abuse is the primary cause of disability, person is ineligible for Disability Assistance. If abuse is a secondary factor in disability, recipient must receive treatment to be eligible for Disability Assistance. 2. No	1. No 2. Yes	None
Minnesota	State resident for at least 30 days ⁹	Persons under 18: No citizenship requirement ¹⁰ Persons 18+: Citizen or legal alien	No screening. Persons suspected of drug dependency referred for assessment.	Yes	All recipients age 18 or over must have a Social Security Number.
Mississippi	No GA Program				
Missouri	State resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	No	Applicant can not have transferred property in order to become eligible. Recipients may be referred to vocational rehabilitation.
Montana Yellowstone County	County resident for at least 30 days	Citizen or legal alien	No	No	None

Table 3.3: Other General Assistance Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

State	Residency Requirement	Citizenship Requirement¹	Drug Screening/Treatment	Work Requirement	Other Requirements
Nebraska 1. State Disability Program 2. County General Assistance ¹	1. State resident 2. County resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	1. No 2. Yes	None
Nevada Clark County	County resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	Yes	None
New Hampshire City of Manchester	No residency requirement	Citizen or legal alien	No	Yes	None
New Jersey	Resident of municipality where benefits are received	Citizen or legal alien	No	Yes	None
New Mexico	State Resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	No	Recipients eligible due to disability must pursue rehabilitation through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.
New York	State resident. For first six months in the state, the maximum benefit is equal to what the benefit, if any, would be in the recipient's state of former residence.	No citizenship requirement	No screening. If drug or alcohol abuse is determined to be contributing to need, recipient may be required to participate in drug or alcohol treatment center or program.	Yes	None

Table 3.3: Other General Assistance Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

State	Residency Requirement	Citizenship Requirement ¹	Drug Screening/Treatment	Work Requirement	Other Requirements
North Carolina Durham County	County resident	No citizenship requirement	No	No	Crisis must exist that will result in loss or lack of essential shelter, utilities, medical needs, or food. Recipient must be able to verify the use of at least 85% of available income.
North Dakota Cass County	County resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	No	None
Ohio	State resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	No	None
Oklahoma	No GA Program				
Oregon	State resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	No	None
Pennsylvania	State resident for at least 12 months, unless left previous state due to an abusive relationship	Citizen or legal alien	No	Yes	None
Rhode Island	State resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	Yes	Persons must first apply for medical assistance, then they can apply for cash assistance.
South Carolina	No GA Program				
South Dakota Minnehaha County	County resident	Citizen or legal alien	No drug screening. Persons unable to work because of chemical dependency are referred to a treatment program.	Yes	None

Table 3.3: Other General Assistance Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

State	Residency Requirement	Citizenship Requirement ¹	Drug Screening/Treatment	Work Requirement	Other Requirements
No GA Program					
Tennessee					
Texas Harris County	County resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	No	None
Utah 1. GA-Self Sufficiency 2. GA-Working Towards Employment	State resident or intent to become resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	1. No 2. Yes	1. Recipients are assessed to determine what activities they can participate in to become self-supporting or increase their income. This may result in requirements for medical or mental health treatment or adult basic education courses. 2. None
Vermont	State resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	Yes	Able-bodied recipients eligible due to having an eighth-grade education or below or inability to read or write must participate in an adult basic education program.
Virginia Fairfax County	County resident	Citizen or legal alien	No	No	None

Table 3.3: Other General Assistance Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

State	Residency Requirement	Citizenship Requirement ¹	Drug Screening/Treatment	Work Requirement	Other Requirements
Washington	State resident	Citizen or legal alien	No screening. If recipient is unemployable due to alcohol or drug abuse, recipient must participate in an appropriate treatment program.	No	Unemployable recipients may be referred to local or state rehabilitative services if such services are available.
West Virginia	No GA Program				
Wisconsin Dane County	County resident for at least 6 months.	Citizen or legal alien	No	No	None
Wyoming	No GA Program				

Source: Urban Institute 1996

1. The phrase “legal alien” is a summarization of complex categories of aliens. For the purpose of this paper it refers to those categories of aliens eligible for AFDC and SSI, including aliens who are lawfully admitted for permanent residency (e.g., “immigrants” or green-card holders) or legally present on a permanent basis (e.g., refugees). It excludes undocumented, or illegal, aliens, temporary aliens (e.g., tourists and students), and some smaller categories of aliens.
2. Alaska. Interim Assistance is currently provided to legal immigrants. When changes in federal law are implemented, excluding legal immigrants from SSI, legal immigrants will no longer be eligible for Interim Assistance.
3. Los Angeles County, California. Sponsored aliens are eligible if 1) they provide the name and address of their sponsor, 2) the sponsor provides income and resource information and verification, and 3) the sponsor signs an agreement to repay the state for the General Relief provided during the sponsorship period. However, sponsors can meet these requirements and then legally refuse to support the alien.
4. Colorado, County of Denver. The 30-day residency requirement is not always enforced. To prevent homelessness, persons may be provided with temporary lodging even if they have been in residence less than 30 days.
5. Colorado. Effective 1/1/97, all applicants will be drug tested. Recipients whose primary disability is chemical dependency will be required to participate in a treatment program and will be limited to a total of 36 months of benefits. Recipients will be drug tested periodically, and anyone with more than two positive drug tests will be permanently ineligible for benefits.
6. District of Columbia. Although there are no restrictions against illegal aliens, SSI applicants must be citizens or legal aliens. Because General Public Assistance (GPA) requires recipients to be awaiting SSI determination, illegal aliens cannot receive GPA.

Table 3.3: Other General Assistance Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

7. Illinois, Chicago. Information for Chicago is representative of the approximately 60 other local entities that receive state funds.
8. Maine. Although illegal immigrants are technically eligible, they cannot meet the program's work requirement and are therefore effectively ineligible.
9. Minnesota. Durational requirement is waived for persons born in Minnesota, persons who at some time lived in Minnesota for 365 consecutive days, persons coming to state to join a relative, or persons accepting offer of employment.
10. Minnesota. Effective 7/97, the requirement that persons have a Social Security Number will be extended to those under age 18, thereby effectively eliminating undocumented aliens under age 18 from eligibility.
11. Nebraska. Information represents the guidelines developed by the Nebraska Association of County Officials and the 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.

Table 3.4: General Assistance Work Requirements
(Summer 1996)

State	Work Program Participants	Work Program Components	Work Program Coordinated with Food Stamp Work Programs
Alabama		No GA Program	
Alaska 1. General Relief Assistance 2. Interim Assistance	1. Able-bodied recipients ages 18-59, unless caretaker or full-time high school student 2. NA	1. Registration with Department of Labor 2. NA	1. No 2. NA
Arizona		No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)	
Arkansas		No GA Program	
California Los Angeles County	All persons without a physical or mental disability	Job Search and workfare. Recipients must register with the Employment Development Department. Applicants and reapplicants must have sought work at 24 job sites in the eight weeks prior to their (re)application for benefits. Recipients must work off their grant at the minimum wage for six days each month. As an alternative to workfare, recipients may enroll in a JTPA training program, an educational program, or other certified program of at least 20 hours per week.	Yes, the two programs are the same.
Colorado 1. Aid to the Needy Disabled (Statewide) 2. GA (City and County of Denver)		1. No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance) 2. No Work Program Requirements	

Table 3.4: General Assistance Work Requirements (cont.)

State	Work Program Participants	Work Program Components	Work Program Coordinated with Food Stamp Work Programs
Connecticut	Able-bodied employable recipients	Work requirement is tailored to person: job service registration, job search, work relief, job training and experience, job readiness counseling, educational services, and workfare. Recipients must accept any job offered. Penalty for quits, fires, and refusals to participate in job-plan activities. Recipients may also participate in JTPA training.	Not currently, but are anticipating coordination in the future.
Delaware	No Work Program Requirements		
District of Columbia	No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)		
Florida Dade County	No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)		
Georgia Fulton County	No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)		
Hawaii	Able-bodied recipients without children under age 3	Job Search, job readiness counseling, registration with Department of Labor.	Yes, it is the same work requirement.
Idaho Ada County	Able-bodied employable recipients	Recipients must be actively seeking employment. There is no formal work program.	No
Illinois City of Chicago	Able-bodied employable recipients not already employed full-time	Job search, work relief, job training and experience, educational services, workfare. Workfare assignments may be full or half 8-hour days for at least 3 days per month, not to exceed 40 hours per week. Wage rates based on prevailing rate in community. ¹	Yes, it is the same program.
Indiana Center Township of Marion County	Able-bodied employable recipients	Job search, job training and experience, job readiness counseling, educational services, workfare. Workfare participants work off the amount of their assistance at a rate of \$8/hour.	No
Iowa	No Work Program Requirements		

Table 3.4: General Assistance Work Requirements (cont.)

State	Work Program Participants	Work Program Components	Work Program Coordinated with Food Stamp Work Programs
Kansas	Although participation in a work program is required, there is no funding to run such a program. However, a recipient who quits his or her job is penalized by losing assistance for 3 months on the first two instances and for 6 months the third time.		Yes, although the Food Stamp program is only available in the larger cities.
Kentucky Jefferson County		No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)	
Louisiana		No GA Program	
Maine	Able-bodied recipients, unless needed in home to care for another	Registration with Maine Job Service and participation in workfare (in some towns) or education or rehabilitation program.	No, although participation in the Food Stamps/AFDC work program may satisfy the GA work requirement
Maryland		No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)	
Massachusetts		No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)	
Michigan	State Family Assistance (SFA) recipients	All SFA recipients are required to maintain employment, unless exempt by AFDC criteria. Some training may be provided to prepare recipient for work, but emphasis is on work first.	Yes. The Michigan Jobs Commission coordinates all job programs in the state.
Minnesota	Able-bodied adults receiving GA as part of a family	Participation in Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET) program.	Yes, FSET is the GA work requirement.
Mississippi		No GA Program	
Missouri		No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)	
Montana Yellowstone County		No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)	
Nebraska ²	Able-bodied County General Assistance recipients except those working at least 30 hours per week	Registration with the Department of Labor.	Yes. Recipients also receiving Food Stamps will go through the Food Stamp work program first, if available in their area.

Table 3.4: General Assistance Work Requirements (cont.)

State	Work Program Participants	Work Program Components	Work Program Coordinated with Food Stamp Work Programs
Nevada Clark County	Able-bodied employable recipients	Workfare: recipients work off their benefits at the minimum wage rate (two days/week). Job Search: recipients are also required to seek work at 40 establishments.	No
New Hampshire City of Manchester	Able-bodied recipients except those needed in the home to care for a person who is elderly, disabled, or a child under 6.	Job search, informal job training and readiness counseling. Workfare: recipients work 2-3 days/week at \$5/hr in city departments, non-profits, food banks, and shelters.	No, although job search through Food Stamp program may satisfy GA job search requirement.
New Jersey	Employable recipients	Job search (recipient must go on job interviews), job training (recipient must accept job training if requested), or workfare.	No. Recipients also receiving Food Stamps are exempted from enrolling in Food Stamps employment and training program (FSET).
New Mexico	No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)		
New York	Able-bodied employable persons.	Workfare; recipients must work off the amount of their benefit at the minimum wage rate.	Yes, GA work requirements are matched to Food Stamps work requirements.
North Carolina Durham County	No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)		
North Dakota Cass County	No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)		
Ohio	No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)		
Oklahoma	No GA Program		
Oregon	No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)		

Table 3.4: General Assistance Work Requirements (cont.)

State	Work Program Participants	Work Program Components	Work Program Coordinated with Food Stamp Work Programs
Pennsylvania	Those receiving GA as a result of active participation in drug or alcohol treatment program, depending on time commitment to program.	Depends on circumstances of recipient. May vary from self-directed job search to job training program.	No
Rhode Island	Able-bodied adults receiving GA benefits as part of a family, if programs are available	Workfare community service jobs. Participation is dependent upon cities and towns to provide programs.	Limited
South Carolina	No GA program		
South Dakota Minnehaha County	Able-bodied recipients not in drug treatment program	All recipients are expected to have jobs. Unemployed recipients are given informal job search help and are required to make 3 job contacts each day. Persons who quit their jobs are ineligible for benefits for the next 30 days.	No
Tennessee	No GA Program		
Texas Harris County	No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)		
Utah	GA-Working Towards Employment recipients	32 hours per week of working at a community work site, and 8 hours of job search.	Yes
Vermont	Able-bodied employable persons in recipient household except those currently working	Participant must make three job contacts per week, document progress to the district office, and maintain contact with the Department of Employment and Training (DET).	No
Virginia	No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)		
Washington	No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)		
West Virginia	No GA Program		

Table 3.4: General Assistance Work Requirements (cont.)

State	Work Program Participants	Work Program Components	Work Program Coordinated with Food Stamp Work Programs
Wisconsin		No Work Program Requirements (employable persons are not eligible for assistance)	
Wyoming		No GA Program	

Source: Urban Institute 1996

1. Illinois. Localities outside Chicago (both those receiving and not receiving state funds) must run workfare programs.
2. Nebraska. Information represents the guidelines developed by the Nebraska Association of County Officials and the 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.

CHAPTER 4: GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BENEFITS AND DURATION

There is great variability among the 42 General Assistance programs in terms of the form, amount, and duration of benefits. Also, some GA programs provide medical assistance in addition to financial assistance. This chapter describes how GA benefits vary across states. More detailed information is available in Table 4.1.

Form of Benefits

Financial assistance provided through GA can be in the form of cash, in-kind benefits through vendor payments or vouchers, or a combination of these. The most common form of GA benefits is “cash,” or a check payable directly to the recipient, and two-thirds of the states with GA programs provide cash assistance. 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, recipients can use vouchers for specific items only, such as food or transportation. The recipient presents the voucher to the vendor, and the GA agency later pays the vendor directly.

Twenty-eight states provide cash benefits to nearly all recipients. Roughly half of these cash assistance programs also provide benefits in the form of vendor payments or vouchers rather than cash in certain circumstances. For example, recipients may request vendor payments or vouchers as a cash management tool. Eleven states provide only vendor payments or vouchers for all recipients. The GA programs in the remaining three states provide either cash or in-kind assistance depending on the eligible group. In each of these three states, recipients with disabilities receive cash payments and all other recipients receive vendor payments or vouchers.

Benefit Maximums

Nearly all GA programs, whether cash or voucher programs, limit the benefits given to each recipient to a maximum monthly dollar amount. Only three states (Idaho, New Hampshire, and South Dakota) do not have maximum dollar amounts; each provides benefits in the form of vouchers that cover the actual costs of goods or services. In addition, Iowa does not have a monthly maximum dollar amount but does have a yearly maximum. Programs that impose a

maximum benefit limit may set different limits according to family size, eligibility category, and/or living arrangement.

Among the states that provide cash benefits, benefit maximums as a percentage of poverty average about 40 percent. Missouri has the lowest cash benefit maximum for individual recipients at 12 percent of poverty. Except for Hawaii and Nebraska, whose benefit maximums for individuals are 71 and 100 percent of poverty, respectively, all states set benefit maximums for individuals at or below 55 percent of poverty. Among the states that provide cash benefits to a family of three, benefit maximums range from a low of 19 percent of poverty in Ohio to 70 percent of poverty in Hawaii.

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 nonexempt income from the maximum benefit level. Thus, for every dollar of non-exempt income added, recipients lose an offsetting dollar of GA benefits. As a result, a state's average GA benefit falls below its maximum benefit. (See tables 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 for average GA benefits by state.)

Duration of Assistance

The duration of General Assistance benefits varies across the states. Eighteen states provide assistance on an ongoing basis, thus imposing no time limits for any recipients as long as other eligibility requirements are met. Fifteen states impose time limits on only a portion of recipients, such as employable individuals and chemically dependent recipients, but provide benefits to all other recipients on an ongoing basis. Only nine states impose time limits on all recipients. Notably, states are more likely to exclude these categories of recipients entirely than to assist them for a limited period of time. Therefore, when assistance is provided, it is more likely to be provided on an ongoing basis.

Among the states without time limits, some periodically review each case or require that recipients reapply every one, three, or six months. As long as persons continue to meet the eligibility criteria, they may continue to receive benefits. States with time limits either limit assistance to a certain number of months within a given time period or establish a lifetime time limit. For example, Arizona and Maryland provide assistance for no more than 12 months in a 36-month period, while North Dakota limits assistance to six months each year. Other states

limit assistance to a total of 3, 9, or 24 months of benefits over the recipient's lifetime. Still other states do not impose time limits, but require persons to apply for vouchers for each separate need. For example, persons in Vermont who need help paying the rent need to request a voucher each time the rent is due. (Programs that provide assistance on a one-time basis, or for only one month in a 12-month period, are considered Emergency Assistance programs and are not included in this report.)

Medical Assistance

In addition to receiving financial assistance, many General Assistance recipients receive medical assistance through a variety of avenues. Table 4.2 provides detailed information on each state's GA medical assistance component. For instance, some states do not impose categorical eligibility requirements for the receipt of medical assistance, and others set more lenient financial eligibility criteria. In four states (Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, and Oregon), all GA recipients are eligible for medical assistance under that state's Medicaid program. Of the remaining 38 states with GA programs, 29 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.¹⁰ In some states, 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, medical coverage is limited to life-threatening conditions. Among the 29 states which provide medical assistance outside of Medicaid, benefits vary widely in both the number and types of services covered. Benefits are usually more limited than Medicaid coverage.

Of the nine states whose GA programs do not include medical assistance components, most have alternative medical assistance programs 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

10. In states with GA medical assistance programs, some GA recipients may also be eligible for Medicaid. In such cases, recipients receive medical assistance through Medicaid rather than through the GA medical assistance program.

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 4.1: General Assistance Monthly Benefits and Duration of Assistance
(Summer 1996)

State	Maximum Monthly Benefits		Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form ¹	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Three Persons			
Alabama	No GA Program				
Alaska	1. \$120	1. \$360	1. 1985	1. Voucher/ Vendor	1. 30 days (unlimited renewals)
1. General Relief Assistance	2. \$280 (\$75 for nursing home residents)	2. NA	2. 1982	2. Cash	2. Until final SSI determination is made
2. Interim Assistance					
Arizona	\$173 if renting \$108 if not renting	NA	NA	Cash	12 months in a rolling 36-month period
Arkansas	No GA Program				
California Los Angeles County	\$221.25 ²	\$431 ³	March 1996	Cash If recipient requests, payments may be made to vendors.	Ongoing
Colorado	1. \$229	1. NA	1. 1960's	1. Cash	1. Ongoing, or until SSI is granted ⁴
1. Aid to the Needy Disabled (Statewide)	2. No dollar maximum	2. No dollar maximum	2. 1981	2. Voucher/ Vendor	2. Depends on specific voucher
2. GA (City and County of Denver)					
Connecticut	\$350 unemployable \$300 employable, not-job-ready ⁵	\$543 ⁶	July 1995 (employable, not-job-ready benefit in effect since July 1992)	Cash If recipient is chemically dependent, payments may be made to vendors or protective payee.	Families and unemployable persons: ongoing Employable, not-job-ready persons: 24 months, including up to 10 months in first 12-month period and 6 months in following 12-month period ⁷

Table 4.1: General Assistance Monthly Benefits and Duration of Assistance (cont.)

State	Maximum Monthly Benefits		Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form ¹	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Three Persons			
Delaware	\$123	\$224	1990	Cash	Ongoing
District of Columbia	\$262	NA	June 1996	Cash	General Public Assistance: until final SSI determination is made General Public Assistance for Children: until children are 18 years old ⁸
Florida Dade County	\$220	\$300	July 1995	Cash, unless special circumstances	Short-term assistance: 90 days Interim assistance: after 90 days of short-term assistance, if SSI approval is likely, assistance is granted for 12 months ⁹
Georgia Fulton County	\$225	NA	March 1983	Cash, unless special circumstances	2 to 6 months (renewals as needed or until SSI starts)
Hawaii	Pregnant women: \$460 Others: \$268	\$712	July 1996	Cash, unless special circumstances	Individual: 24 months Family: ongoing
Idaho Ada County	No Maximum. Vendor/voucher payments cover actual costs. Costs must be "reasonable."		NA	Voucher/Vendor	Able-bodied adults (including families): 3 months/year, unlimited number of years Disabled persons: ongoing

Table 4.1: General Assistance Monthly Benefits and Duration of Assistance (cont.)

State	Maximum Monthly Benefits		Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form ¹	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Three Persons			
Illinois City of Chicago ¹⁰ 1. Transitional Assistance 2. Family and Children Assistance	1. \$100 2. \$212	1. NA 2. \$377	February 1996	City of Chicago: Cash, unless special circumstances Localities receiving State Funds: Voucher/Vendor	Ongoing (annual redetermination)
Indiana Center Township of Marion County	Rent: \$450 (if includes utilities) <u>Utilities:</u> \$150 <u>Food:</u> \$119 <u>Household supplies:</u> \$19.81 All amounts are subject to the discretion of the township trustee.	Rent (depends on number of bedrooms) Two bedrooms: \$508 Three bedrooms: \$635 <u>Utilities:</u> no max <u>Food:</u> \$313 <u>Household supplies:</u> \$32.63	October 1995	Voucher/Vendor	30 days (Renewable every 30 days for up to six months. Must reapply after six months.) Poor relief is designed to meet short-term needs.
Iowa Polk County	\$1,029/year ¹¹	\$1,278/year ¹¹	August 1989	Voucher/Vendor	Recipients must reapply for each new need. Benefit maximum is in effect for one year starting from the date of application. No time limits.
Kansas	\$196 ¹²	\$403 ¹²	Benefit levels have been indexed to AFDC for many years.	Cash	Ongoing, or until SSI is granted
Kentucky Jefferson County	\$140 ¹³	\$200 ¹³	Mid-1980's	Voucher/Vendor	12 months

Table 4.1: General Assistance Monthly Benefits and Duration of Assistance (cont.)

State	Maximum Monthly Benefits		Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form ¹	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Three Persons			
Louisiana	No GA Program				
Maine	Varies by county. Average maximum: \$353	Varies by county. Average maximum: \$556	October 1995	Voucher/Vendor	30 days (unlimited renewals)
Maryland 1. Transitional Emergency, Medical, and Housing Assistance (TEMHA) 2. GA for Pregnant Women	1. \$100 2. \$125	1. NA 2. NA	1. January 1996 2. July 1996	1. Cash. If recipient is chemically dependent and not in drug treatment, payments must be made to vendors or protective payee. 2. Cash. Payments for minors must be made to protective payee.	1. SSI applicants: 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 2. Until third trimester
Massachusetts	\$304 public housing \$339 private	\$487 public housing \$522 private	July 1988	Cash, unless special circumstances	Ongoing
Michigan 1. State Disability Assistance 2. State Family Assistance	1. \$246 (\$40 if not living independently) 2. NA	1. NA 2. Varies by region from \$424 to \$489	January 1992	Cash If recipient requests, or if Family Assistance recipient is misusing benefits, payments may be made to vendors.	1. No more than 12 months 2. Ongoing

Table 4.1: General Assistance Monthly Benefits and Duration of Assistance (cont.)

State	Maximum Monthly Benefits		Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form ¹	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Three Persons			
Minnesota	\$203	\$532	1990	Cash If recipient requests, payments may be made to vendors. If recipient is chemically dependent, at least 85% of payments must be made to vendors.	Ongoing
Mississippi	No GA Program				
Missouri	\$80	NA	July 1985	Cash	Ongoing, or duration of disability
Montana Yellowstone County	\$261	NA ¹⁴	July 1996	Voucher/Vendor	SSI applicants: until final SSI determination is made Temporarily disabled: 3 months. The 3-month period may be renewed but recipients must then apply for SSI.
Nebraska 1. State Disability Program 2. County General Assistance ¹⁵	1. \$645 2. \$225	1. NA 2. \$350	1. 1996 2. 1986	1. Cash 2. Voucher/Vendor	1. Length of disability or until receipt of SSI 2. Three months (unlimited renewals)
Nevada Clark County	\$277 ¹⁶	\$466	1991	Cash, unless special circumstances	30 days (unlimited renewals)

Table 4.1: General Assistance Monthly Benefits and Duration of Assistance (cont.)

State	Maximum Monthly Benefits		Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form ¹	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Three Persons			
New Hampshire City of Manchester	No maximum	No maximum	NA	Voucher/Vendor	No limit. GA is seen as emergency, short-term assistance, but it can be used long term if necessary.
New Jersey	Employable: \$140 Unemployable: \$210 ¹⁷	NA	1987	Cash	Ongoing
New Mexico	\$231	\$389	July 1996	Cash	Persons with disabilities: 12 months; assistance may be renewed only after 9 months off assistance. Children: ongoing
New York	\$352 (Values for New York City. Amount varies by county)	\$577 (Values for New York City. Amount varies by county)	1990	Cash, unless special circumstances	6 months (unlimited renewals)
North Carolina Durham County	Maximums set on a case by case basis according to emergency needs. (Rent: \$190, prescription drugs: \$30, special request: \$100)	NA	1987	Voucher/Vendor	Three months in any year, but may be longer on a case by case basis.
North Dakota Cass County	\$175 (\$225 if rent includes heat)	\$275 (\$325 if rent includes heat)	1991	Voucher/Vendor	Six months

Table 4.1: General Assistance Monthly Benefits and Duration of Assistance (cont.)

State	Maximum Monthly Benefits		Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form ¹	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Three Persons			
Ohio	\$115	\$193	1991	Cash	Six months (unlimited renewals)
Oklahoma	No GA Program				
Oregon	\$286	NA	July 1995	Cash	Until final SSI determination is made
Pennsylvania	\$215 ^{1,8}	\$421 ^{1,8}	June 1990	Cash	Persons unemployable due to active participation in drug and alcohol treatment program: 9 months in lifetime Temporarily disabled: duration of disability Permanently disabled: ongoing
Rhode Island	Disabled adults: \$200 Others: \$327	\$554	1994	Cash	Families: ongoing SSI applicants: until final SSI determination is made Medical assistance: 6 months, renewable for up to another 6 months
South Carolina	No GA Program				
South Dakota Minnehaha County	No maximum totals Maximum rent: \$350/mo Maximum utilities: \$350/year		1992	Voucher/Vendor	Ongoing
Tennessee	No GA program				

Table 4.1: General Assistance Monthly Benefits and Duration of Assistance (cont.)

State	Maximum Monthly Benefits		Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form ¹	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Three Persons			
Texas Harris County	\$109.50	\$201	Not Available	Cash, unless special circumstances	Temporarily disabled: duration of disability. Permanently disabled: until final SSI determination. If recipient is denied SSI, continuation of benefits is made on a case by case basis.
Utah 1. GA-Self Sufficiency 2. GA-Working Toward Employment	1. \$246 2. \$291	NA	1994	Cash	1. Ongoing until recipient overcomes barrier or receives SSI 2. 7 months out of an 18-month period; unlimited reapplications
Vermont	first 60 days: no maximum thereafter: \$436 in Chittenden county; \$396 in rest of state	first 60 days: no maximum thereafter: \$636 in Chittenden county; \$597 in rest of state	July 1996	Voucher/Vendor for most items; cash for groceries	Recipients must apply for each new need. Duration is usually monthly or less based on need, but additional applications may be granted as long as the need exists and eligibility criteria are met.
Virginia Fairfax County	\$220 (\$74 if recipient not responsible for shelter)	\$354 (\$207 if recipient not responsible for shelter)	July 1996	Cash If recipient is chemically dependent, payments must be made to vendors or protective payee.	Unemployables: 9 months in a 12-month period, unlimited renewals Children: ongoing

Table 4.1: General Assistance Monthly Benefits and Duration of Assistance (cont.)

State	Maximum Monthly Benefits		Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form ¹	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Three Persons			
Washington	Unemployable: \$339 Pregnant woman or child with guardian: \$349	Children with guardian: \$546	Unemployable: January 1991 Pregnant woman and children with guardians: September 1994	Cash If recipient is chemically dependent, payments must be made to protective payee.	Unemployable: duration of disability Pregnant women: until third trimester Child with guardian: ongoing until child turns 18
West Virginia	No GA Program				
Wisconsin Dane County	\$247	NA	1986	Cash, although shelter benefits may be vouchers.	Three months (unlimited renewals)
Wyoming	No GA Program				

Source: Urban Institute 1996

1. Vouchers and vendor payments typically cover rent, utilities, and food. States may also cover transportation, clothing, burial, household supplies, and other items.
2. California, Los Angeles County. Monthly benefit of \$221.25 includes \$212.00 in cash and \$9.25 in clothing allowance paid semi-annually in a lump-sum of \$55.50.
3. California, Los Angeles County. Monthly benefit of \$431.00 includes \$134.42 per person in cash and \$9.25 per person in clothing allowance paid semi-annually in a lump-sum of \$55.50.
4. Colorado. Effective 1/1/97, recipients whose primary disability is chemical dependency will be limited to a lifetime total of 12 months of benefits.
5. Connecticut. Employable: \$250 if share housing; \$150 if living with relative.
6. Connecticut. Benefit levels for families vary according to living costs in three regions of the state. Approximately 90 percent of the caseload resides in Region B, where the maximum monthly benefit is \$543.
7. Connecticut. At end of 24-month period, recipient can petition for a six-month extension.
8. District of Columbia. Children who are 18 years old and are expected to graduate from high school before turning 19 may continue to receive assistance.

Table 4.1: General Assistance Monthly Benefits and Duration of Assistance (cont.)

9. Florida, Dade County. After 12 months, assistance may be extended if SSI application is at the hearing level and recipient is represented by an attorney.
10. Illinois, City of Chicago. Information for Chicago is representative of the approximately 60 other local entities that receive state funds.
11. Iowa, Polk County. Benefits are determined on a case by case basis. Maximum benefit levels are set at the income guidelines for a period of one year (\$343 individual; \$426 family of three). However, exemptions can be made on a case by case basis so that recipient can potentially receive three times the income guideline level.
12. Kansas. Individual benefit maximums reflect 80% of the AFDC income limit and benefit maximums for a family of three reflect 100% of the AFDC income limit, which varies by the cost of living in each county. Benefit maximums shown apply to 70-80 percent of recipients. Benefit maximums are reduced if recipient is in a shared residence.
13. Kentucky, Jefferson County. Benefit amounts may be increased up to double the regular amount if the regular financial assistance amount will not alleviate the recipient's crisis.
14. Montana, Yellowstone County. Although technically, families not eligible for AFDC are eligible for General Relief, it has been two years since any family has met the eligibility requirements.
15. Nebraska. Information represents the guidelines developed by the Nebraska Association of County Officials and the Department of Social Services used in the administration of the general assistance programs for 56 of 93 counties which elect to contract with the state.
16. Nevada, Clark County. If recipient lives rent-free, the benefit will be lower.
17. New Jersey. Some GA recipients may also be eligible to receive 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, 3) evicted or about to become evicted; and demonstrate a lack of realistic capacity to plan for substitute housing (don't have enough time to find housing or funds are exhausted due to other expenses). If in temporary housing (hotel or motel) benefit maximum is \$35 per day for an individual, \$45 per day for two persons. If in permanent housing, benefit maximum is \$200 per month regardless of unit size. However, special permission may be granted to exceed the \$200 per month maximum on a case by case basis. This housing assistance comes in the form of vendor payments.
18. Pennsylvania. Maximum Monthly benefits listed are for those counties in the highest cost of living category.

Table 4.2: General Assistance Medical Assistance Programs
(Summer 1996)

State	Persons Eligible for GA Medical Assistance Program ¹	GA Medical Assistance Program Benefits ²
Alabama	No GA Program	No GA Program
Alaska	All GA recipients plus others meeting GA income and asset eligibility requirements. Persons must be in emergency medical need.	Inpatient hospital care for up to 8 days per year; pregnancy-related services; physician visits (12 visits/yr) and prescription drugs for terminal illnesses, chemotherapy, diabetes, seizure disorders, chronic mental illness, and hypertension only; nursing home care. Inpatient hospital care is covered at 28%. For other services covered, the state pays Medicaid rates.
Arizona	No GA Medical Assistance Program	No GA Medical Assistance Program
Arkansas	No GA Program	No GA Program
California Los Angeles County	Recipients are referred to the LA County Health Department for health services. (Except permanently disabled recipients, who are typically eligible for MediCal, California's Medicaid program.)	Inpatient and outpatient care, physician services, prescription drugs, and nursing home care.
Colorado	No GA Medical Assistance Program	No GA Medical Assistance Program
Connecticut	All GA recipients meeting medical income eligibility requirements. Income limits: \$473/person/month Persons must first apply for Medicaid if eligible.	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, and prescription drugs. Coverage is comparable to Medicaid, except GA medical assistance does not cover long-term convalescent care, routine ambulance transportation, or routine dental care.
Delaware	All GA recipients plus others without medical insurance and whose income is below the federal poverty level are eligible for coverage under the Diamond State Health Plan (Medicaid waiver).	All GA recipients plus others without medical insurance and whose income is below the federal poverty level are eligible for coverage under the Diamond State Health Plan (Medicaid waiver).
District of Columbia	GA recipients are eligible for Medicaid.	GA recipients are eligible for Medicaid.
Florida Dade County	No GA Medical Assistance Program	No GA Medical Assistance Program
Georgia Fulton County	No GA Medical Assistance Program ³	No GA Medical Assistance Program ³

Table 4.2: GA Medical Assistance Programs (cont.)

State	Persons Eligible for GA Medical Assistance Program ¹	GA Medical Assistance Program Benefits ²
Hawaii	All GA recipients are eligible for QUEST (Medicaid Waiver)	
Idaho Ada County	County residents of at least 30 days, who are in emergency medical need and have no resources to cover the cost.	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, prescription drugs, and nursing homes. General Assistance pays Medicaid rates. ⁴
Illinois City of Chicago ⁵	All GA recipients, unless they receive Medicaid (persons under 18, pregnant women, and persons with pending SSI applications).	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care (only for Family and Children recipients over 18), physician services, prescription drugs required for life maintenance or to avert a life-threatening situation. Coverage is more limited than Medicaid.
Indiana Center Township of Marion County	All GA recipients plus others meeting GA income eligibility requirements. Must be in medical need.	Prescription drugs and long-term care in a county home. (Hospitals provide free inpatient, outpatient, and physician care for indigent persons.) Coverage is more limited than Medicaid.
Iowa Polk County	No GA Medical Assistance Program ⁶	
Kansas	All GA recipients.	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, prescription drugs, and nursing homes. Coverage is nearly identical to Medicaid.
Kentucky Jefferson County	No GA Medical Assistance Program	
Louisiana	No GA Program ⁷	
Maine	All GA recipients plus others meeting GA income eligibility requirements. Must be in medical need.	Benefits provided for prior-approved treatment of life-threatening conditions. Covered services include physician services and prescription drugs. (Hospital care covered by charity care.) Coverage is more limited than Medicaid.

Table 4.2: GA Medical Assistance Programs (cont.)

State	Persons Eligible for GA Medical Assistance Program ¹	GA Medical Assistance Program Benefits ²
<p>Maryland</p> <p>1. Transitional Emergency, Medical, and Housing Assistance (TEMHA)</p> <p>2. GA for Pregnant Women</p>	<p>About half of all GA recipients, including pregnant women are eligible for Medicaid. The remaining GA recipients plus others who meet medical income eligibility requirements are eligible for Primary Care for the Medically Indigent and Maryland Pharmacy Assistance.</p>	<p>Primary Care for the Medically Indigent covers basic primary care (physician) services.</p> <p>Maryland Pharmacy Assistance Program covers a limited set of prescription drugs.</p> <p>Coverage is much more limited than Medicaid.</p>
<p>Massachusetts</p>	<p>All GA recipients, unless they have other coverage such as Medicaid or private insurance.</p>	<p>Outpatient hospital care, physician services, and prescription drugs (Inpatient hospital care is provided under the State Free Care Pool.) Coverage similar to but somewhat more limited than Medicaid.</p>
<p>Michigan</p>	<p>Persons meeting medical assistance financial eligibility criteria.</p> <p>Income limits: \$246 (\$90 earned income exemption). Asset limit: \$100.</p>	<p>Outpatient hospital care, physician services, and prescription drugs.</p> <p>Coverage is more limited than Medicaid.</p>
<p>Minnesota</p>	<p>All GA recipients plus others who meet GA income and asset eligibility requirements.</p>	<p>Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, prescription drugs.</p> <p>Coverage is comparable to Medicaid except does not cover nursing homes.</p>
<p>Mississippi</p>	<p>No GA Program</p>	
<p>Missouri</p>	<p>All GA recipients.</p>	<p>Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, and prescription drugs.</p> <p>Coverage is much more limited than Medicaid.</p>
<p>Montana Yellowstone County</p>	<p>GA recipients in medical need.</p>	<p>Medical assistance covers up to \$10,000 for treatment of serious medical conditions. Covered services include inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, and prescription drugs.</p> <p>Coverage is more limited than Medicaid.</p>

Table 4.2: GA Medical Assistance Programs (cont.)

State	Persons Eligible for GA Medical Assistance Program ¹	GA Medical Assistance Program Benefits ²
Nebraska 1. State Disability Program 2. County General Assistance ⁸	<p>1. All State Disability Program recipients.</p> <p>2. Persons meeting medical income eligibility requirements.</p> <p>Income limits: If gross income less than \$2,680 and net income less than \$1,700 over a six-month period. If gross income less than \$2,680 and net income between \$1,700 and \$2,680 over a six-month period, then eligible, but responsible for payments in excess of \$283 per month. For family of 3, if gross income less than \$4,560 and net income less than \$2,700 over a six-month period then eligible. If gross income less than \$4,560 and net income between \$2,700 and \$4,560 over a six-month period, then eligible, but responsible for payments in excess of \$450 per month.</p>	<p>1. Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, prescription drugs, nursing home. Coverage is the same as Medicaid.</p> <p>2. Covered services include only those that are required to prevent morbidity or institutionalization. Coverage is more limited than Medicaid.</p>
Nevada Clark County	<p>Persons meeting medical income and asset eligibility requirements.</p> <p>Income limits: \$552 (individual); \$928 (family of 3) Income exemptions: \$300 (individual); \$350 (family of 3), as well as an additional \$100 if recipient is elderly or disabled, child care costs (up to \$300 for one child or \$500 for two or more children), alimony, child support, and any income needed for medical expenses.</p> <p>Asset limits: \$500 personal assets (or \$1000 if disabled at least 3 months; \$2000 if disabled at least 12 months)</p>	<p>Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, prescription drugs, nursing home care</p> <p>Medical Assistance usually pays at Medicaid rates.</p>
New Hampshire City of Manchester	<p>All persons in need of medical assistance.</p>	<p>Physician services and prescription drugs. (Hospitals accept needy patients free of charge. Nursing homes are covered by Medicaid.)</p>
New Jersey	<p>All GA recipients.</p>	<p>Physician services and prescription drugs. Coverage is more limited than Medicaid.</p>
New Mexico	<p>No GA Medical Assistance Program⁹</p>	

Table 4.2: GA Medical Assistance Programs (cont.)

State	Persons Eligible for GA Medical Assistance Program ¹	GA Medical Assistance Program Benefits ²
New York	All GA recipients plus persons eligible for GA but who elect to receive medical assistance only.	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, prescription drugs, nursing homes. Coverage is comparable to Medicaid.
North Carolina Durham County	All GA recipients.	\$30/month for prescription drugs, limited to 4 months per year.
North Dakota Cass County	No GA Medical Assistance Program	No GA Medical Assistance Program
Ohio	All GA recipients, plus able-bodied medication-dependent persons who meet the income eligibility criteria and would become incapacitated if stopped taking medication.	Physician services and prescription drugs. (Inpatient and outpatient hospital care is covered by hospitals under the Ohio Hospital Care Assurance program.) Coverage is comparable to Medicaid.
Oklahoma	No GA Program	No GA Program
Oregon	All GA recipients are eligible for coverage under the Oregon Health Plan (Medicaid waiver).	No GA Program
Pennsylvania	All GA recipients plus Medical Need Only (MNO) recipients. MNO Eligibility Criteria: Recipients must be employed at least 30 hours per week or pregnant. Income limits: \$425 for individual, \$467 for family of 3. Asset limits: \$2,400 for individual, \$3,500 for three persons (no asset limits if child in household).	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 co-pay for most services and a \$150 deductible. Coverage is comparable to Medicaid.
Rhode Island	All GA recipients, plus other persons temporarily or permanently disabled whose income is less than \$327 per month.	Physician visits and prescription drugs. Hospitals are required to cover the costs of inpatient and outpatient care.
South Carolina	No GA Program	No GA Program
South Dakota Minnehaha County	All GA recipients plus others meeting medical income eligibility requirements. Must be in medical need. Income limits: \$1,655 individual; \$2,785 family of 3 (300% of the Poor Relief income limits)	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, prescription drugs, nursing home. Coverage is comparable to Medicaid.

Table 4.2: GA Medical Assistance Programs (cont.)

State	Persons Eligible for GA Medical Assistance Program ¹	GA Medical Assistance Program Benefits ²
Tennessee	No GA Program. Persons with income under 400% of poverty are eligible for TennCare (Medicaid waiver). Since 1994, however, new enrollment is limited to uninsurable persons and persons who would have been eligible under prior Medicaid eligibility requirements.	
Texas Harris County	No GA Medical Assistance Program ¹⁰	
Utah	All GA Recipients plus persons who meet GA income and asset limits but elect to receive medical assistance only.	Acute care required in life threatening-situations (such as an emergency room visit). Some prescriptions are covered. Coverage is much more limited than Medicaid.
Vermont	GA recipients in 'catastrophic' circumstances.	Emergency physician services and prescription drugs only. Coverage is much more limited than Medicaid.
Virginia Fairfax County	All GA recipients plus other county residents who are citizens or legal aliens. Must be in emergency medical need for which they cannot pay.	Physician services, prescription drugs, and nursing home care. All services must be related to an emergency medical need. The total monthly maximum is \$500. (Inpatient and outpatient hospital care is covered by the State and Local Hospital Program.)
Washington	Temporarily disabled recipients. (All other recipients receive benefits under the state Medicaid program.)	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, prescription drugs, and nursing home care. Coverage is similar to but somewhat more limited than Medicaid.
West Virginia		No GA Program
Wisconsin Dane County	All GA recipients.	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, and prescription drugs. Nursing home care for up to thirty days. Coverage is comparable to Medicaid.
Wyoming		No GA Program

Source: Urban Institute 1996

1. 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.
2. 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, for the purpose of consistency this additional information is not included in the report.

Table 4.2: GA Medical Assistance Programs (cont.)

3. 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: 100% of poverty level.
4. Idaho, Ada County. The county covers the first \$10,000 of medical expenses per case (first \$5,000 for illegal alien); the state covers any additional expenses.
5. Illinois, Chicago. Information for Chicago is representative of the approximately 60 other local entities that receive state funds.
6. Iowa, Polk County. Recipients are referred to the county hospital that has an indigent care program. In addition, some medical needs which are not covered by the indigent care program may be covered through General Assistance on a case by case basis.
7. Louisiana. The state has a Charitable Hospital System which provides medical care on a sliding fee scale.
8. Nebraska. Information represents the guidelines developed by the Nebraska Association of County Officials and the Department of Social Services used in the administration of the general assistance programs for 56 of 93 counties which elect to contract with the state.
9. New Mexico. The state offers medical exams for persons eligible for GA due to a disability. In addition, some counties have an indigent health care program for uninsured needy persons.
10. Texas, Harris County. Recipients are referred to the district hospital that has an indigent care program.

CHAPTER 5: GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM CASELOADS AND EXPENDITURES

It is particularly difficult to obtain data on General Assistance caseloads and expenditures that are comparable across states. Indeed, we were able to gather statewide caseload and expenditure information only from those states with uniform GA programs across the state. For the states with GA programs that vary by county, we have data only from the particular county we contacted.

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 vary across states. Some states record their caseloads as number of persons while others record them as cases, in which a single case may include a family of three. 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.

Uniform Statewide General Assistance Programs

Among states with uniform statewide GA programs, caseloads and expenditures vary widely (Table 5.1). Monthly caseloads range from about 1,000 persons in Alaska and Rhode Island to over 130,000 persons in Pennsylvania and almost 340,000 persons in New York. However, when compared to the total state population, the number of persons assisted by GA is quite small. The number of recipients assisted each month ranges from less than 0.1 percent of persons in Oregon and Utah to just over 1.8 percent of persons in New York. Even when comparing the number of recipients to the number of persons in poverty, GA programs assist only a portion of those in need. For instance, in New York, GA program recipients represent only about 11 percent of those living in poverty.¹¹

11. This figure was determined by using state poverty rate information in Eleanor Baugher and Leatha Lamison-White, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P60-194, *Poverty in the United States: 1995*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1996.

Annual spending on General Assistance ranges from about \$4 million in Utah and Vermont to over \$1 billion in New York. Average monthly benefits range from \$80 per case in Missouri to \$425 per case in Hawaii, although most states have average monthly benefits between \$100 and \$300 per case.

Other General Assistance Programs

Tables 5.2 and 5.3 contain information for county-based statewide GA programs and programs in states without mandated programs, respectively. Although intra-state variability of county-based GA programs makes inter-state comparisons of these programs less appropriate, available caseload and expenditure information can provide some indication of how many persons are served by GA in each state. Comparisons between the general county population and the number of GA recipients were not possible, except for Los Angeles County, where about 1 percent of county residents receive GA each month.

Table 5.1: General Assistance Program Caseloads and Expenditures, Uniform Statewide Programs

State	Caseload and Expenditures				Monthly Number of Recipients (or Cases) per 1,000 Population ¹
	Reporting Period	Average Monthly Caseload	Annual Expenditures	Average Monthly Benefit (per Case)	
Alaska 1. General Relief Assistance 2. Interim Assistance	FY Ending June 1996	1. 226 cases (294 persons) 2. 761 persons	1. \$0.9 million 2. \$2.8 million	1. \$334 (\$156 excluding burials) 2. \$250	1. 0.5 persons 2. 1.3 persons
Arizona	May 1996	5,683 persons	\$0.9 million/month	\$153	1.4 persons
Colorado (Aid to the Needy Disabled) ²	June 1996	approx. 6,000 persons	Not Available	Not Available	1.6 persons
Connecticut ³	FY Ending March 1995	27,450 cases	Cash Assistance: \$92.6 million Medical assistance: \$90.3 million	Cash Assistance: \$281 Medical assistance: \$281	8.4 cases
Delaware	FY Ending June 1995	2,102 cases ⁴	\$3.1 million	Individual: \$193 Family of three: \$224	2.9 cases
District of Columbia 1. General Public Assistance 2. General Public Assistance for Children	1995	1. approx. 2,000 cases 2. approx. 750 cases	1. \$7.0 million 2. \$2.2 million	1. \$275 2. \$398	1. 3.6 cases 2. 1.4 cases
Hawaii ⁵	FY Ending June 1995	9,239 cases (13,217 persons)	\$47.1 million (net of reimbursements)	\$425	11.6 persons

Table 5.1: General Assistance Program Caseloads and Expenditures, Uniform Statewide Programs (cont.)

State	Caseload and Expenditures				Monthly Number of Recipients (or Cases) per 1,000 Population ¹
	Reporting Period	Average Monthly Caseload	Annual Expenditures	Average Monthly Benefit (per Case)	
Kansas	FY Ending June 1996	3,348 cases (4,440 persons)	Cash assistance: \$7.8 million Medical assistance: \$9.5 million	\$193	1.7 persons
Maine	FY Ending June 1995	3,227 cases (6,376 persons)	\$8.6 million	\$221	5.2 persons
Maryland 1. Transitional Emergency, Medical, and Housing Assistance (TEMHA) 2. GA for Pregnant Women	1. 7/95-5/96 2. Not Available	1. 12,967 cases (and persons) 2. Not Available	1. approx. \$10.0 million 2. Not Available	1. as of 1/96, all benefits are \$100 2. Not Available	1. 2.6 persons 2. Not Available
Massachusetts	FY Ending June 1996	17,298 cases	Cash assistance: \$72.1 million Medical assistance: \$33.8 million	\$330	2.9 cases
Michigan 1. State Disability Assistance 2. State Family Assistance	FY Ending October 1995	1. 9,291 cases (and persons) 2. 2,256 cases (approx. 6,800 persons)	1. \$26.0 million 2. \$7.3 million	1. \$233 2. \$270	1. 1.0 persons 2. 0.7 persons
Minnesota ⁶	1995	15,312 cases (20,003 persons)	\$54.8 million	\$298	4.3 persons

Table 5.1: General Assistance Program Caseloads and Expenditures, Uniform Statewide Programs (cont.)

State	Caseload and Expenditures					Monthly Number of Recipients (or Cases) per 1,000 Population ¹
	Reporting Period	Average Monthly Caseload	Annual Expenditures	Average Monthly Benefit (per Case)		
Missouri	FY Ending June 1995	Cash assistance: 5,414 cases (persons)	Cash assistance: \$7.0 million	\$80		Cash assistance: 1.0 persons
Nebraska	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available		Not Available
New Jersey	FY Ending June 1995	Cash assistance for employables: 22,638 cases Cash assistance for unemployables: 10,709 cases	Cash assistance for employables: \$37.8 million Cash assistance for unemployables: \$25.4 million	Cash assistance for employables: \$141 Cash assistance for unemployables: \$198		Cash assistance for employables: 2.8 cases Cash assistance for unemployables: 1.4 cases
New Mexico	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available		Not Available
New York	1995	279,179 cases (338,511 persons)	\$1,089 million	\$325 ⁷		18.7 persons
Ohio ⁸	1995	Cash assistance: 34,432 cases (40,505 persons) Medical assistance: 20,399 persons	Cash assistance: \$48.2 million Medical assistance: \$40.4 million	Cash assistance: \$117 Medical assistance: \$165		Cash assistance: 3.6 persons Medical assistance: 1.8 persons
Oregon	1993-1995	2,152 cases	\$7.6 million	Individual: \$286 Couple: \$572		0.7 cases
Pennsylvania ⁹	FY Ending June 1995	118,409 cases (134,441 persons)	\$263.1 million	\$185		11.1 persons

Table 5.1: General Assistance Program Caseloads and Expenditures, Uniform Statewide Programs (cont.)

State	Caseload and Expenditures				Monthly Number of Recipients (or Cases) per 1,000 Population ¹
	Reporting Period	Average Monthly Caseload	Annual Expenditures	Average Monthly Benefit (per Case)	
Rhode Island	1993-1995	850 cases	Not Available	Not Available	0.9 cases
Utah 1. GA-Self Sufficiency 2. GA-Working Toward Employment	FY Ending July 1995	1. 1,172 cases (1,252 persons) 2. 357 cases (454 persons)	1. \$3.5 million 2. \$.7 million	1. \$246 2. \$159	1. 0.6 persons 2. 0.2 persons
Vermont	FY Ending June 1995	1,502 cases	\$3.9 million	\$214	2.6 cases
Washington	FY ending June 1995	Unemployable persons: 17,167 cases (17,292 persons) Pregnant women and children with guardians: 1,657 cases (1,711 persons)	Unemployable persons: \$53.6 million Pregnant women and children with guardians: \$6.4 million	Unemployable persons: \$247 Pregnant women and children with guardians: \$306	Unemployable persons: 3.2 persons Pregnant women and children with guardians: 0.3 persons

Source: Urban Institute 1996

1. Recipients per 1,000 population estimates were derived using state civilian population data as of 7/1/95, released by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.
2. Colorado. Information reflects the statewide Aid to the Needy Disabled program only; other General Assistance programs vary by county.
3. Connecticut. As of 9/96, job-ready employable persons are no longer eligible for cash assistance under the state's General Assistance program.
4. Delaware. Nearly all of the caseload is made up of individuals.
5. Hawaii. Effective 8/95, able-bodied adults ages 55-65 are no longer eligible for cash benefits. (Prior to this date, they had been the only able-bodied persons eligible for assistance.)
6. Minnesota. Figures do not include those for the Work Readiness program for able-bodied individuals, which was terminated as of 7/95. In 1994, the Work Readiness program had an average monthly caseload of 1,541 and an annual expenditure of \$43.3 million.

Table 5.1: General Assistance Program Caseloads and Expenditures, Uniform Statewide Programs (cont.)

7. New York. Average monthly benefits reflect an average monthly family benefit of \$454 and an average one-person monthly benefit of \$303.
8. Ohio. Caseload and expenditure information for Ohio reflects the Disability Assistance Program. It excludes data for the General Assistance (GA) program, the program for able-bodied adults, which was terminated as of 8/95. During the first 7 months of 1995, the GA program had an average monthly cash caseload of 49,577 (50,736 persons) and an average monthly medical assistance caseload of 19,931 persons. Expenditures under the GA program were \$34.5 million for cash assistance and \$12.6 million for medical assistance.
9. Pennsylvania. Effective 6/96 able-bodied individuals and families are no longer eligible for cash assistance.

Table 5.2: General Assistance Program Caseloads and Expenditures, County-Based Statewide Programs

State	Reporting Period	Average Monthly Caseload	Annual Expenditures	Average Monthly Benefit (per Case)
California Los Angeles County	1995	91,844 persons ¹	\$20.8 million	Individual: \$226 Families: Not Available
Idaho Ada County	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
Illinois City of Chicago and approx. 60 other localities receiving state funds 1. Transitional Assistance 2. Family and Children Assistance (FCA)	1995	1. 8,924 cases (and persons) 2. 1,246 cases (1,528 persons)	1. \$12.4 million 2. \$2.5 million Medical assistance (for both TA and FCA): \$7.4 million	1. \$116 2. \$170
Indiana Center Township of Marion County	1995	4,545 total cases (11,071 persons) in 1995	\$1.5 million	Not Available
Iowa Polk County	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
Nevada Clark County	FY Ending July 1996	Cash assistance: 8,428 total cases in FY 96 Medical assistance: 10,819 total cases in FY 96	Cash assistance: \$2.4 million Medical assistance: \$28.7 million	Not Available
New Hampshire City of Manchester	FY Ending July 1996	2,427 total cases in FY 96	Not Available	\$402/year
South Dakota Minnehaha County	1995	482 cases	\$2.8 million	Not Available

Source: Urban Institute 1996

1. California, Los Angeles County. The average number of monthly GA recipients per 1,000 Los Angeles county residents is approximately 9.9 persons. This estimate was calculated using the Los Angeles County population as of 7/1/94, as provided in the California Statistical Abstract, 1995.

Table 5.3: General Assistance Program Caseloads and Expenditures, States Without Mandated Programs

State	Reporting Period	Average Monthly Caseload	Annual Expenditures	Average Monthly Benefit (per Case)
Florida Dade County	1995	720 cases	\$1.8 million	\$204
Georgia Fulton County	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
Kentucky Jefferson County	FY Ending June 1995	2,902 cases (total for FY 1995)	\$1.0 million (net of SSI reimbursements)	Not Available
Montana Yellowstone County	FY 1996	Nonmedical assistance: 93 total persons in FY 1996 Medical assistance: 63 total persons in FY 1996	Nonmedical assistance: \$61,473 Medical assistance: \$69,075	Not Available
North Carolina Durham County	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
North Dakota Cass County	1995	42 cases (total for 1995)	\$33,728 (mostly for burial expenditures)	Not Available
Texas Harris County	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
Virginia Fairfax County	May 1995	598 cases (673 persons)	\$198,920/month	Not Available
Wisconsin ¹	November 1995	871 nonmedical cases; 1,866 medical and nonmedical cases; 5,263 medical-only cases	Nonmedical assistance: \$54.5 million Medical assistance: \$13.3 million	Nonmedical assistance: \$90 Medical assistance: 1,120

Source: Urban Institute 1996

1. Wisconsin. Information reflects statewide program enrollment and expenditures prior to the institution of the block grant program, but after Milwaukee County dropped its nonmedical assistance program. Monthly caseload averages for 1994, when Milwaukee County had a nonmedical assistance program, are as follows: 6,475 nonmedical cases; 3,172 medical and nonmedical cases; 2,799 medical-only cases.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR CHANGES TO GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS SINCE 1992

Many states have implemented changes to their General Assistance programs since the publication of the previous GA report in 1992 by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the National Conference of State Legislatures. These changes, detailed in Table 6.1, have taken three forms: (1) benefit level changes, (2) contractions in eligibility, and (3) miscellaneous other changes.

Benefit Level Changes

Few states increase benefits with inflation. In fact, most benefit levels set during or prior to 1992 remain in effect in 1996. Over the last four years, 8 states enacted benefit increases; 6 states reduced benefits; and two-thirds of the states held benefits constant. Of the states that increased benefits, none increased benefits by more than inflation. Therefore, in real terms GA benefits either remained constant or decreased since 1992.

Of states that decreased benefit levels, California deserves special mention. In 1993, the state of California gave counties the right to seek state mandate relief by reducing GA benefit levels. The California county surveyed for this report (Los Angeles County) responded by lowering benefits by about 25 percent for individuals in 1996.

Contractions in Eligibility

Several states implemented some type of major program contraction since 1992. In January 1996, Wisconsin terminated its GA program, a county-based program which had provided assistance to all needy persons (the state set minimum benefits and some eligibility rules). It was replaced with a block grant program, under which counties can choose whether to have a program. However, counties that choose to have a nonmedical assistance program must also have a medical assistance program. Several counties have chosen not to provide GA, and among those that do have GA programs, some have narrowed the populations eligible for assistance (e.g., eliminated eligibility for able-bodied employable individuals without children), and some now provide only medical assistance. In addition, Montana eliminated the state-run

GA program that was administered in 12 of its 56 counties, although some counties continue to administer their own GA programs.

In addition to the changes in Wisconsin and Montana, five states (Connecticut, Hawaii, Minnesota, Ohio, and Pennsylvania) eliminated benefits for able-bodied employable individuals without children; Pennsylvania eliminated benefits for families as well. Except for persons no longer eligible for benefits in Ohio, a portion of persons losing eligibility for GA cash assistance may continue to be eligible for medical assistance. Two states (Arizona and Rhode Island) eliminated benefits for pregnant women. Four states tightened the eligibility criteria for persons with disabilities (Arizona, Florida, Oregon, and Rhode Island), and three states (Arizona, Hawaii, and New Mexico) decreased the duration for which benefits are available to disabled recipients. In addition, Vermont tightened the eligibility criteria for able-bodied individuals without children.

Miscellaneous Other Changes

Aside from benefit level changes and contractions in eligibility, several states also implemented other changes to their GA programs since 1992. These changes are detailed in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Major Changes to General Assistance Programs Since 1992
(Summer 1996)

State	Benefit Level Changes	Contractions in Eligibility	Other Major Changes
Alabama		No GA Program	
Alaska	None	In 1994, the medical assistance program reduced coverage of inpatient hospital charges from the Medicaid rate to 28% of costs, and limited the length of stay covered to 8 days.	None
Arizona	None	Effective 7/93, duration of assistance for disabled persons reduced from ongoing to 12 months in a 36 month period. Effective 6/96, eligibility is restricted to persons disabled 12 months or longer; this tightened the previous criteria of 30 days or longer. Effective 6/96, pregnant women are no longer eligible for medical assistance program.	None
Arkansas		No GA Program	
California Los Angeles County	Effective 11/93, counties were given the right to appeal the standard of aid (to seek state mandate relief), and in 1996 this period was extended to 36 months. Los Angeles County was granted a reprieve from the state mandate in 1996 and was allowed to lower its benefits; benefits were reduced by about 25% for individuals and 15% for families.	Effective 1/97, counties were given the option to implement a variety of program changes, including: (1) limiting benefits for able-bodied recipients to 3 months in a 12 month period (time limits can only be imposed if recipients have been offered job skills or training sessions), and (2) requiring mandatory drug screening and treatment. At this time, Los Angeles County has made no decisions on whether to implement these options.	None

Table 6.1: Major Changes to General Assistance Programs Since 1992 (cont.)

State	Benefit Level Changes	Contractions in Eligibility	Other Major Changes
<p>Colorado</p> <p>1. Aid to the Needy Disabled (Statewide)</p> <p>2. GA (City and County of Denver)</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>1. Effective 6/96, asset limits and exemptions became matched to those imposed under SSI.</p> <p>Effective 1/97, all applicants will be drug tested. If chemical dependency is primary disability, recipients will be required to participate in a treatment program and will be limited to a total of 36 months of benefits. Recipients will be drug tested periodically and anyone with more than two positive drug tests will be permanently ineligible for benefits.</p> <p>2. None</p>
<p>Connecticut</p>	<p>Since 1992, benefit levels have been slightly reduced nearly every year for all categories of recipients.</p>	<p>Effective 9/96, employable, job-ready persons are no longer eligible for GA cash assistance. Employable, not-job ready remain eligible.</p>	<p>The state is gradually taking increased responsibility for the administrative control and funding for the GA program.</p>
<p>Delaware</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>District of Columbia</p>	<p>Effective 10/1/96 benefits will be reduced by 4%.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>The auto (asset) exemption will be increased from \$1500 to \$4500 to conform with Food Stamps eligibility criteria.</p>
<p>Florida</p> <p>Dade County</p>	<p>Prior to 7/95, benefits varied according to whether the recipient paid rent. (Those not paying rent received lower benefits.) Now everyone receives the same benefit.</p>	<p>The current program was put into effect on 7/95, and has more restrictive eligibility requirements than the previous program.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Georgia</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>

Table 6.1: Major Changes to General Assistance Programs Since 1992 (cont.)

State	Benefit Level Changes	Contractions in Eligibility	Other Major Changes
Hawaii	In 1995, program became a block grant program. The benefit levels vary by the number of people needing assistance; the amounts of the grant and benefits change every few months.	Effective 8/95, able-bodied adults ages 55-65 are no longer eligible for benefits. Effective 7/96, benefits for individuals are limited to 24 months (retroactive to 7/95).	None
Idaho Ada County	NA (All benefits are in the form of vouchers/vendor payments; no maximum benefits.)	None	Effective 7/96, applications for medical coverage must be filed within a set time. New legislation defines explicitly which services are "medically necessary" and which resources applicants must seek before seeking county assistance.
Illinois City of Chicago	Effective 7/95, benefit levels under the Transitional Assistance Program decreased by about 35%.	None	Effective 7/95, Interim Assistance changed from being a separate program to being part of Transitional Assistance.
Indiana Center Township of Marion County	Benefits are changed each year to reflect inflation.	None	None
Iowa	None	None	None
Kansas	None	None	None
Kentucky Jefferson County	None	None	The county is in the process of creating a system of multi-service centers, which will include the Emergency Financial Assistance program.
Louisiana	No GA Program		

Table 6.1: Major Changes to General Assistance Programs Since 1992 (cont.)

State	Benefit Level Changes	Contractions in Eligibility	Other Major Changes
Maine	Effective 7/93, maximum benefit levels split into urban/rural, so that a single county may have two benefit levels. Benefits are updated each October in coordination with HUD updates.	Effective 7/93, towns can require recipients to fulfill Workfare requirement before providing benefits, unless an emergency exists. Effective 7/93, Maine parents are financially responsible for their children up to age 25.	None ²
Maryland 1. Transitional Emergency, Medical, and Housing Assistance (TEMHA) 2. GA for Pregnant Women	1. The TEMHA program replaced the Disabled Assistance Loan Program (DALP) in 7/95. TEMHA began as a voucher program, while DALP had been a cash assistance program. TEMHA was then reorganized in 1/96 and became a cash program, providing a flat benefit amount of \$100 per month. It is a capped program, so that when the allocated budget is depleted, no new recipients can be served. 2. On 7/96 benefits decreased by about 40%. Pregnant women who are minors are required to live with a caretaker relative or in a supervised living arrangement; payments are made to protective payees.		
Massachusetts	None	None	None
Michigan	None	None	State Disability Assistance will adopt the same definition of disability for drug and alcohol addiction as the Social Security Administration is adopting.
Minnesota	None	Effective 7/95, the Work Readiness program for employable persons was eliminated. Effective 7/96, adult recipients must have a Social Security Number, and effective 7/97 children must have a Social Security Number. These requirements effectively eliminate undocumented aliens from eligibility.	Effective 6/95, work requirement for Individual (non-family) GA recipients eliminated. Effective 7/96, 30 day residency requirement implemented.
Mississippi	No GA Program		
Missouri	None	None	None

Table 6.1: Major Changes to General Assistance Programs Since 1992 (cont.)

State	Benefit Level Changes	Contractions in Eligibility	Other Major Changes
Montana Yellowstone County	Benefit levels are adjusted annually to reflect 40.5% of the federal poverty level.	The 1993 legislature terminated a state-run general assistance program that had operated in 12 counties.	None
Nebraska	None	None	None
Nevada Clark County	None	None	None
New Hampshire City of Manchester	NA (All benefits are in the form of vouchers/vendor payments; no maximum benefits.)	None	None
New Jersey	None	None	The 6 month limit on assistance for employable adults was eliminated. Benefits are now ongoing.
New Mexico	Benefit levels change with AFDC. Last increase was 7/96.	Effective 10/95, duration of assistance for persons with disabilities is limited to 12 months, with a required 9 months off assistance before recipient can reapply. Previously, duration was ongoing.	None
New York	None	None	Effective 7/96, a new residency requirement limits the maximum benefit for the 6 months in New York to the benefit, if any, in the recipient's former state of residence.
North Carolina	None	None	None
North Dakota Cass County	None	None	None
Ohio	None	Effective 8/95, the GA program for able-bodied adults was eliminated.	None
Oklahoma	No GA Program		

Table 6.1: Major Changes to General Assistance Programs Since 1992 (cont.)

State	Benefit Level Changes	Contractions in Eligibility	Other Major Changes
Oregon	Since 1992, benefit levels increased by about 7%.	Effective 7/95, benefits are no longer available to persons with a short term disability.	None
Pennsylvania	None	Effective 6/96, able-bodied adults and families are no longer eligible for assistance.	None
Rhode Island	None	Pregnant women are no longer eligible for assistance. Temporarily disabled persons are no longer guaranteed cash assistance, although they continue to qualify for medical assistance.	None
South Carolina		No GA program	
South Dakota Minnehaha County	None	None	None
Tennessee		No GA Program	
Texas Harris County	None	None	None
Utah	Benefits increased by about 5% in 1994.	None	None

Table 6.1: Major Changes to General Assistance Programs Since 1992 (cont.)

State	Benefit Level Changes	Contractions in Eligibility	Other Major Changes
Vermont	<p>Prior to 1995, there were no benefit maximums. In 1995, benefit maximums were implemented for benefits received after the first 60 days of assistance. These maximums match AFDC limits and benefit levels change with AFDC. Last change 7/96.</p>	<p>Prior to 1995, persons age 40 and older were considered to have a barrier to employment. In 1995, this age was increased to 55.</p> <p>Prior to 1995, having an eighth grade education or less and being unable to read or write constituted two barriers to employment. Beginning in 1995, having both or either of these characteristics constitutes one barrier to employment.</p> <p>Effective 1995, able-bodied couples without children are eligible only if both persons meet eligibility criteria. In the past they were eligible as long as one spouse met eligibility criteria.</p> <p>Effective 1995, unmarried couples with children must apply for benefits as a household. Previously they could apply separately.</p>	None
Virginia Fairfax County	<p>Effective 7/96, benefit levels decreased from 100% of standard of assistance to 90% of standard of assistance.</p>	None	None
Washington	<p>Benefits for pregnant women and children with guardians increased by about 3%.</p>	None	None
West Virginia	No GA Program		

Table 6.1: Major Changes to General Assistance Programs Since 1992 (cont.)

State	Benefit Level Changes	Contractions in Eligibility	Other Major Changes
Wisconsin	<p>In 9/95, Milwaukee County chose to no longer pay any form of nonmedical assistance. As of 1/96, the state terminated the General Relief program, which mandated all counties to cover all needy persons (the state set minimum benefits and some eligibility rules). It was replaced with the Relief Block Grant Program. Under this new program, counties can choose whether to have a program. However, counties which choose to have a nonmedical assistance program must also have a medical assistance program. (Milwaukee County is prohibited by statute from having a nonmedical program.) In Dane County, other changes that went into effect at this time include excluding able-bodied adults and illegal aliens from eligibility (both groups were eligible under the prior program) and adding a 60-day residency requirement.</p>		
Wyoming		No GA Program	

Source: Urban Institute 1996

1. Connecticut. Effective 4/96, the proportion of GA costs funded by the state increased from 80% to 90%. Effective 4/97, the state will take over GA administration in 10 cities. This will include 65% of the GA cases. Effective 7/98, the state will take over GA entirely (with the possible exception of a few towns).
2. Maine. Effective 7/93, the state's model ordinance was changed to incorporate the following: (1) persons who provide false information, do not apply for potential resources, or do not fulfill their work requirement are disqualified from benefits for 120 days (this increased from the previous disqualification period of 90 days), (2) any applicant who has ever received GA in Maine is not considered a new applicant and is accountable for his or her income and expenditures in the 30 days prior to reapplication, and (3) if applicants have forfeited federal benefits by breaking the rules of the federal program, GA will no longer replace that income.

APPENDIX A: DATA COLLECTION

GA program information is not routinely collected. The last comprehensive survey of the states regarding this program was conducted in 1992 by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the National Conference of State Legislatures. The 1992 report collected information similar to that of previous studies conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services in 1978, 1982, and 1989. To obtain information on the status of GA programs in 1996, the Urban Institute conducted a telephone survey of each state and the District of Columbia between June and August 1996. Staff interviewed program officers in each state and contacted county program officers to obtain further information on GA programs in states with county-run rather than state-run GA programs. However, in states with more than one county-administered GA program, we only interviewed program officers in the most populous county.¹ To ensure the accuracy of the information gathered during the telephone interview, survey results were written up and sent to the GA program officers for verification.

1. This report contains information for the following counties: Los Angeles County, California; County of Denver, Colorado; Dade County, Florida; Fulton County, Georgia; Ada County, Idaho; City of Chicago, Illinois; Center Township of Marion County, Indiana; Polk County, Iowa; Jefferson County, Kentucky; Yellowstone County, Montana; Clark County, Nevada; City of Manchester, New Hampshire; Durham County, North Carolina; Cass County, North Dakota; Minnehaha County, South Dakota; Harris County, Texas; Fairfax County, Virginia, and Dane County, Wisconsin. (Mecklenburg County, the most populous county in North Carolina, could not be contacted, and was replaced in this survey by Durham County, North Carolina. The general assistance program in Milwaukee County, the most populous county in Wisconsin, only provides medical assistance and was therefore replaced by Dane County, the second most populous county in that state, whose GA program provides both cash assistance and medical assistance.)