



Social Services: General Relief

What is General Relief?

The General Relief (GR) program is a state-mandated, county-funded general assistance program for county residents who lack minimum resources for food, shelter and medical care. The GR program acts as a safety net as most recipients of GR are ineligible for other types of cash assistance offered through the federal and state programs. These benefits must be repaid.

Who receives General Relief?

Nonfinancial requirements for GR include:

- Residency in Humboldt for at least 15 days (proof required)
- Signing a lien (an agreement to repay granting the county the right to intercept future payments from the Internal Revenue Service, Social Security, sale of real property, etc.)
- If able to work, agree to cooperate with county in efforts to improve skills and find employment
- If unable to work, must provide proof, and agree to seek and continue treatment
- Generally, adults without children age 18 to 64
- Those with children, those under 18 or over 64 are likely eligible for other programs.

Income

- The effective income limit is the monthly benefit amount of \$303.
- Unearned income is deducted dollar-for-dollar from the monthly benefit.
- Earned income is given a 20% deduction prior to counting the remaining against the benefit.
- If a person's item of need is met by another person, for example a relative providing housing, the grant amount is reduced.

Property

- Limit of \$1,000 in real and personal property combined.

What are the Benefits?

Eligible individuals receive up to \$303 per month in benefits to use to meet basic needs. If a customer has a need met by another individual or agency, such as housing, the grant amount is reduced. Benefits are first paid to landlords and utility companies, with the remainder of eligible benefits issued to the customer's EBT card as cash benefits. Customers without a housing or utility expense will be referred to a local shelter with availability. Recipients will not receive the housing portion of the GR grant until they have a housing expense. If they are unable to stay at a shelter due to a verified medical condition, they may receive the full GR allotment.

GR staff ensure GR customers have CalFresh and Medi-Cal to make sure their nutrition and health care needs are met. The ability to seek treatment can be a significant benefit for some who have not had access to consistent medical care for years.

The Process

Individuals can apply and be interviewed in person or over the phone:

- 929 Koster St., Eureka, CA

- 68 Orchard Street, Hoopa, CA *no interviews at this location
- 3306 Renner Drive, Fortuna CA *no interviews at this location
- 727 Cedar Street, Garberville CA
- Calling the Eureka Call Center at 1-877-410-8809

The interview is an hour-and-a-half to two hours and covers income, property, work history, residency and barriers to self-sufficiency. Individuals must provide all needed information and verification of that information and agree to cooperate with work requirements.

It's Repayable

GR is a loan program: All benefits issued are repayable. Sources of repayment include garnishment from back pay for disability payments, garnishment from IRS tax refunds, and direct payments from former customers.

Services are Temporary

The goal of GR is to provide supports and services to individuals to enable them to achieve self-sufficiency through employment, or, if disabled, to secure federal assistance.

Benefits for employable individuals are limited to three months in a 12-month period. Able-bodied customers must be available to meet GR work requirements, complete monthly job searches and participate in Helping Humboldt, an occupational empowerment program to gain job skills and work experience.

Individuals with a temporary disability that prevents them from even light work, such as clerical, assembly etc., may be excused from work activities. Individuals with short-term health issues preventing work must be actively seeking medical treatment as a condition of General Relief eligibility.

Individuals with a long-term disability that prevents the customer from even light work may be provided with assistance or guidance through the application process for Supplemental Security Income/State Supplemental Payments, known as SSI/SSP. This may include help gathering medical, social, psychological and other information necessary to the application or reconsideration

Transportation Assistance Program

Customers applying for GR may benefit from the Transportation Assistance Program (TAP). TAP provides permanent relocation services to those who have a job or place to stay waiting for them out of county. There is a TAP brochure; ask for it if not already provided.

Frequently Asked Question

Why does the county have a GR program?

The county funds the General Relief program because it is mandated by state law. Welfare & Institutions Code 1700 states "Every county ...shall relieve and support all incompetent, poor, indigent persons..." and goes on to specify details. There is no funding provided to the counties to meet this mandate. The Board of Supervisors in each county creates and approves the rules for the county General Relief program through resolution, with the goal of meeting the requirements of the law, helping individuals in critical need, and using taxpayer dollars wisely. The current resolution authorizing and defining Humboldt's GR program is Resolution No. 7-51, available on the county website.