



LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
**COMMISSION ON HIV**



# EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE STANDARDS OF CARE

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

March 12 – April 2, 2020

Email comments to [HIVComm@lachiv.org](mailto:HIVComm@lachiv.org)



**Standards of Care Review  
Guiding Questions for Public Comment**

**Service-Specific Questions**

1. Are the standards up-to-date and consistent with national standards of high-quality HIV and STD prevention services and the Comprehensive HIV Plan?
2. Are the standards reasonable and achievable for providers?
3. Will the standards engage and meet consumer needs? Are they client-centered?
4. Is there anything missing with regard to accessing emergency financial assistance under Ryan White funding?
5. Are the references still relevant?



## EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE STANDARDS OF CARE

### INTRODUCTION

Standards of Care for the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Part A Program outline the elements and expectations a service provider should follow when implementing a specific service category. The standards are written for providers and provide guidance on what services may be offered when developing their Ryan White Part A programs. The standards set the minimum level of care Ryan White funded agencies should offer to clients, however, providers are encouraged to exceed these standards.

The Los Angeles County Commission on HIV developed the Emergency Financial Assistance Standards of Care to ensure people living with HIV (PLWH) can apply for short-term or one-time financial assistance to assist with emergency expenses. The development of the Standards includes guidance from service providers, consumers, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health - Division of HIV and STD Programs (DHSP), as well as members of the Los Angeles County Commission on HIV, Standards & Best Practices Committee.

***All contractors must meet the Universal Standards of Care in addition to the following Emergency Financial Assistance Standards of Care.<sup>1</sup>***

### EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OVERVIEW

Emergency Financial Assistance (EFA) provides limited one-time or short-term payments to assist a Ryan White Part A client with an urgent need for essential items or services due to hardship. The purpose of emergency financial assistance is to ensure clients can pay for critical services that play a role on whether a client is able to stay engaged in medical care and/or adhere to treatment. EFA is a needs-based assistance program, not a government entitlement, subject to the availability of funding. Emergency financial assistance must occur as a direct payment to an agency or through a voucher program. Direct cash payments to clients are not permitted.

**Emergency financial assistance should only be provided for an urgent or emergency need for essential items or services necessary to improve health outcomes. Agencies are responsible for referring clients to the appropriate Ryan White service category related to the need for continuous provision of services and non-emergency situations.**

An emergency is defined as:

- Unexpected event that hinders ability to meet housing, utility, food, medication need; and/or
- Unexpected loss of income; and/or
- Experiencing a crisis situation that hinders ability to meet housing, utility, food, or medication need

Based on capacity and contract guidance from DHSP, an agency may provide emergency financial assistance if the client presents with an emergency need that cannot first be met through the appropriate Ryan White Service Category.

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<sup>1</sup> Universal Standards of Care can be accessed at <http://hiv.lacounty.gov/Standard-Of-Care>

**Table 1. Categories for Determining Emergency Needs and Ryan White Services**

<b>Emergency Need</b>	<b>Ryan White Service Category</b>
Short term rental assistance	Housing Services
Move-in assistance	
Essential utility assistance	
Emergency food assistance	Nutrition Services
Transportation	Transportation
Medication assistance to avoid lapses in medication	Ambulatory Outpatient Medical

**KEY COMPONENTS**

Emergency Financial Assistance (EFA) services provide people living with HIV with limited one-time or short-term financial assistance due to hardship. Agencies will establish program services based on agency capacity and Division of HIV & STD Programs contract requirements. EFA is decided on a case-by-case basis by a case manager or social worker and is subject to the availability of funding. Financial assistance is never paid directly to clients, but issued via checks or vouchers to specific vendors or agencies.

Agencies and staff will make every effort to reduce the amount of documentation necessary, while staying within funding and contract requirements, for a client in need of emergency financial assistance. A signed affidavit declaring homelessness should be kept on file for clients without an address.

EFA services are capped annually per client at \$5,000 per 12-month period.

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

Agencies coordinating EFA will follow eligibility requirements for potential clients based on DHSP guidance and the type of financial assistance the client is seeking. Clients may enter EFA services through self-referral or referral by a case management or another provider. Each client requesting EFA will be subject to eligibility determination that confirms the need for services. Programs coordinating EFA are responsible to determine such eligibility. Eligibility documentation should be appropriate to the requested financial assistance and completed annually, at minimum, or for every instance a client seeks emergency financial assistance.

Eligibility criteria includes:

- Los Angeles County resident
- Verification of HIV positive status
- Current proof of income
- Emergency Financial Assistance (EFA) application based on the type of assistance the client is requesting

In addition to the general Ryan White eligibility criteria, priority should be given to individuals who

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present an emergency need with the appropriate documentation that qualifies as an emergency, subject to payor of last resort requirements.

**REFERRALS**

All service providers must work in partnership with the client, their internal care coordination team and external providers, both Ryan White funded and non-Ryan White funded sites, to ensure appropriate and timely service referrals are made according to client’s needs.

In addition, agencies and staff are responsible for linking clients to care if they are not in care as well as addressing the conditions that led to the emergency need to ensure accessing EFA is a one-time need or rare occurrence. For clients accessing EFA services, staff is responsible for referring clients to a program with a case manager or Medical Care Coordination provider if they are not linked already. For more information, see *Universal Standards, Section 6: Referrals and Case Closure*.

**Table 1. Emergency Financial Assistance Standards of Care**

SERVICE COMPONENT	STANDARD	DOCUMENTATION
Staff Requirement and Qualifications	Agencies will hire staff with experience in case management in an area of social services or experience working with people living with HIV. Bachelor’s degree in a related field preferred.	Staff resumes on file
	Staff are required to seek other sources of financial assistance, discounts, and/or subsidies for clients requesting EFA services to demonstrate Ryan White funding is the payor of last resort. (See Appendix A for a list of additional non-Ryan White resources).	Lists of other financial sources, discounts, and/or subsidies for which the staff applied for the client on file. See <i>Appendix A</i> as a reference starting point.
	Staff are required to connect clients to or provide referrals for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Case manager for a needed service or for Medical Care Coordination</li> <li>• Wraparound services to empower clients and prevent future use of Emergency Financial Assistance services</li> <li>• Opportunities for trainings such as job or workforce trainings</li> </ul>	Lists of referrals the staff provided to the client.  Name of case manager(s) client connects with in client file.
Eligibility	Agency will determine client eligibility for EFA at minimum annually, or for every instance a client requests EFA. Eligible uses may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short term housing rental assistance</li> </ul>	Documentation of emergency need and eligible use in client file.  Documentation of Ryan White eligibility requirements in client file. See <i>Universal Standards (Section 5.2, page 10)</i> .

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essential utility assistance</li> <li>• Emergency food assistance</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Medication assistance to avoid lapses in medication</li> </ul> <p>*Continuous provision of service or non-emergency needs should fall under the appropriate Ryan White service category and not under EFA.</p>	
Housing Assistance	<p>Eligible clients must provide evidence they are a named tenant under a valid lease or legal resident of the premises.</p> <p>If rental assistance is needed beyond an emergency, please refer to our <i>Housing Standards, Temporary Housing Services - Income Based Rental Subsidies (page 15)</i>.<sup>2</sup></p>	<p>Documentation in client file that demonstrates emergency need and type of assistance received.</p> <p>Application for Housing Assistance includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice from landlord stating past due rent or, in the case of new tenancy, amount of rent and security deposit being charged</li> </ul>
Utility Assistance	<p>Eligible clients must provide evidence they have an account in their name with the utility company or proof of responsibility to make utility payments.</p> <p>Limited to past due bills for gas, electric, or water service.</p> <p>Staff is responsible for checking client eligibility for SoCal Edison assistance program</p>	<p>Documentation in client file that demonstrates emergency need and type of assistance received.</p> <p>Application for Utility Assistance includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy of the most recent bill in client name or a signed affidavit with the name of the individual that is responsible for paying the bill.</li> <li>• Copy of the lease that matches the address from the bill</li> <li>• Proof of inability to pay</li> </ul>
Food Assistance	<p>Limited to gift card distribution to eligible clients by medical case managers or social workers at their discretion and based on need.</p> <p>Staff is responsible for referring clients to a food pantry.</p>	<p>Documentation in client file that demonstrates emergency need and type of assistance received.</p>

<sup>2</sup> Housing Standards, Temporary Housing Services can be accessed at <http://hiv.lacounty.gov/Standard-Of-Care>

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<p>Transportation Assistance</p>	<p>Eligible clients must provide evidence they are in need of transportation to/from appointments related to core medical and support services.</p> <p><i>See Transportation Services Standards of Care.<sup>3</sup></i></p>	<p>Documentation in client file that demonstrates emergency need and type of assistance received.</p>
<p>Medication Assistance</p>	<p>Eligible clients must provide evidence they are need of medication assistance to avoid a lapse in medication.</p>	<p>Documentation in client file that demonstrates emergency need and type of assistance received.</p>

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<sup>3</sup> Transportation Standards of Care can be accessed at <http://hiv.lacounty.gov/Standard-Of-Care>

**APPENDIX A**

**EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE RESOURCES**

The list below is intended to provide agency staff with starting point of additional resources to assist clients with emergency needs. Please note it is not a comprehensive list of available resources in Los Angeles County and staff are encouraged to seek other resources for client care.

211 Los Angeles  
<https://www.211la.org/>  
Phone: Dial 2-1-1

Los Angeles Housing + Community Investment Department, City of Los Angeles (HCIDLA)  
Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA)  
<https://hcidla.lacity.org/people-with-aids>

Comprehensive Housing Information & Referrals for People Living with HIV/AIDS (CHIRP LA)  
<http://www.chirpla.org/>

Los Angeles Housing Services Authority  
<https://www.lahsa.org/get-help>

Department of Public Social Services, Los Angeles County  
<http://dpss.lacounty.gov/wps/portal/dpss/main/programs-and-services/homeless-services/>

CalWorks - Monthly financial assistance for low-income families who have children under 18 years old  
<https://yourbenefits.laclrs.org>

Los Angeles Regional Food Bank – Free and low-cost food  
[www.lafoodbank.org/get-help/pantrylocator](http://www.lafoodbank.org/get-help/pantrylocator)

Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) – Low Income Discount Program or Lifeline Discount Program for Utility Bill Assistance  
Phone: (213) 481-5411

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) – Utility Bill Assistance  
<http://www.csd.ca.gov/Services/FindServicesinYourArea.aspx>  
Phone: (866) 675-6623

Veterans of Foreign Wars – Unmet Needs Program  
<https://www.vfw.org/assistance/financial-grants>

City of West Hollywood HIV/AIDS Resources  
<https://www.weho.org/services/social-services/hiv-aids-resources>

The People’s Guide to Welfare, Health & Services  
<https://www.hungeractionla.org/peoplesguide>