

General Relief 60-Month Time Limits Change Proposal

Introduction

This proposal will present a recommendation to update the General Relief (GR) time limit policy to limit eligibility to GR benefits to a maximum of 60 months in a recipient's lifetime. The feasibility of this proposed policy change is dependent on the GR grant being increased to \$342, which would align with the 1991 federal poverty line mandated by Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 17000.5. The GR grant proposal will further explain the reasoning and goals of these recommendations.

Current Policy

GR employable participants are eligible to receive up to nine months of aid in a 12-month period if they are participating in an employment and training program. In Los Angeles County, employment and training are administered through the START Program. After receiving aid for nine months, a participant's GR benefits are discontinued, making them ineligible for further benefits for three months. Participants can continue to cycle in and out of the program indefinitely, if eligible. Los Angeles County is subject to the WIC 17000.6 and therefore, must have a time limit of at least six months on aid in a 12-month period.

WIC 17000.6

The county may not prohibit an employable individual from receiving aid under this part for less than 6 months in a 12-month period, whether or not the months are consecutive. If an employable individual has taken and continues to take all steps to apply for appropriate positions and has not refused an offer of employment without Good Cause, a county shall extend aid until the individual has received aid for 9 months in a 12-month period.

Challenges

Terminating a participant's GR benefits and discontinuing their enrollment in employment and training activities creates disruptions for both them and their START Case Manager (SCM). For participants, the current time limit policy can impact the types of activities they are enrolled in. Before assigning a participant to an activity, the SCM must ensure that the length of the activity falls within the participants time left on GR, potentially limiting access to activities that are an essential part of their career pathway. Also, participants no longer have access to supportive services or ancillaries, during the time they are off from GR and not participating in START. Participants who do not secure employment or another source of income when their benefits are terminated, are very likely to return to

GR and START at the end of the 12-month period.

The number of participants whose GR benefits are terminated due to time limits is substantial. GR terminations from February 2023 through January 2024 show a monthly average of 41% of all GR terminations were due to time limits.

Average Monthly GR Time Limit Terminations (Feb 2023-Jan 2024)

GR Caseload	Total Terminations	Time Limit Terminations	% Terminations
116,341	11,740	4,814	41%

Source: GR Time Limit Assessment

Furthermore, more recent data from May 2024, shows that 32% of all GR terminations were due to time limits. While the percentage of terminations due to time limits has declined, it still represents approximately a third of all GR terminations.

Participants returning to GR and START after the three-month period of ineligibility must go through the application/intake process to determine eligibility to GR and be referred back to START. This business process impacts workload volume for GR Intake Eligibility Staff, causing higher volumes of GR applications being submitted online and in-person.

Moreover, participants referred back to START are often assigned to a different SCM than previously assigned and must wait several weeks for an appointment in START. The SCM works at re-assessing career needs and re-establishing trust and collaboration with the participant, which is a crucial component in ensuring participants are engaged and vested in their pathway to self-sufficiency. In fact, SCMs have reported having more success with individuals in START when they are able to work with them for longer periods and build trust, establish goals, and practice collaboration.

Proposed New Policy and Goals

The GR time limits policy should be revised to align with the policies of other cash assistance programs like CalWORKs (CW), which allows individuals on aid to be granted a lifetime time limit of 60 months. If the GR grant is increased to \$342 a month, the County will be in accordance with WIC 17000.5, which provides no restrictions on time limits for counties to follow.

WIC 17000.5

The board of supervisors in any county may adopt a general assistance standard of aid, including the value of in-kind aid which includes, but is not limited to, the monthly actuarial value of up to forty dollars per month of medical care, that is 62 percent of a guideline that is equal to the 1991 federal official poverty line and may annually adjust that guideline in an amount equal to any adjustment. The

adoption of a standard of aid pursuant to this section shall constitute a sufficient standard of aid.

The goal for the change in GR time limit policy is to foster a more efficient program for both DPSS staff and participants. A longer, once-in-a-lifetime time limit will lead to fewer GR terminations and re-applications. Additionally, participants will continue to work with the same SCM throughout their time in the program, allowing for a better participant/case manager relationship. The positive impact this policy change can have on the participant/case manager relationship can lead to increased participant engagement, activity completion and ultimately, employment.

Impact/Benefits

Participants will benefit from the change in policy by having the freedom to enroll in activities with less concern for their time left on GR. Additionally, the change in this policy will maintain participants in START Program without having to re-apply for GR, be assigned a new SCM, and wait for an appointment to be assessed and enrolled in an activity.

A benefit for the Department with this change includes the ability to explore partnerships with different providers who offer longer and more in-depth activities, which can ultimately lead to better employment and training opportunities for participants.

Cost

To modify the GR time limit policy to 60 months in a lifetime, the GR grant amount must increase to \$342 a month which would potentially result in an increase in costs for the Department. This increase in cost can be offset by a smaller START program, which will require less need for supportive services, ancillaries, etc. It may potentially save the Department money through the course of years, as GR participants that stay on aid will be limited to 60 months as opposed to the current policy which lets them apply and re- apply for aid indefinitely.

Recommended Next Steps

Upon approval of the GR time limit policy change the following steps will occur:

1. Share the proposal with County Counsel for review;
2. Draft the full proposals which will also include the fiscal analysis;
3. Share the full proposal with the Chief Executive Office and the Board Deputies for their review and approval;
4. Share approved proposals with the Workgroup(s);
5. Share proposals/recommendations coming out of the Workgroups with County Counsel again and Risk Management for their clearance;
6. Draft Board Letter with recommendations and submit for Executive staff's approval;

7. Upon the Department Head's approval, submit the proposal package to the Board for their approval; and
8. Draft approved policies, train staff on new policies/programs and develop a communications campaign to inform participants and the community about the policy change. Requests to change CalSAWS logic and revisions to Notices of Action will also need to be completed.

Decision: Approve Do Not Approve Let's Discuss