



MILLE LACS BAND OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS
Executive Branch of Tribal Government

Commissioner's Order 67-97

A Commissioner's Order establishing an Emergency Assistance Funds Policy for the Emergency Assistance Program for Health & Human Services Department effective October 6, 1997.

Whereas, pursuant to Title 4 MLBSA § 7(h) and (i), the Commissioner of Health & Human Services has the authority to develop policy in the area under their respective jurisdiction, and;

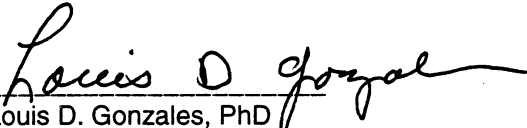
Whereas, the Emergency Assistance Program is in need of an effective policy & procedure manual, and;

Whereas, the current policy and procedure manual does not address all of the needs of Mille Lacs Band members, and;

Whereas, the policy and procedures manual does not give the Emergency Assistance Review Board enough direction to for the acceptance/denial of emergency requests, and;


Now Therefore, by the authority vested in me, I, Louis D. Gonzales, Commissioner of Health & Human Services hereby establish the following Emergency Assistance Fund policy for the Emergency Assistance Program.

Dated at Vineland, Minnesota, this 6th day of October, 1997.


Louis D. Gonzales, PhD
Commissioner of Health & Human Services

APPROVED AS TO FORM,
EXECUTION AND NUMBERING

OFFICIAL SEAL OF THE BAND


James Genia
Solicitor General

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Emergency Assistance Funds Policy
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Commissioner's Order 67-97

Policy Title: Emergency Assistance Funds Policy

#:HHS-0001-EAF

Department: Health & Human Services

Date: 10/97

Policy Statement:

In order to assist in meeting the emergency needs of Mille Lacs Band members, the Band has established a fund to assist persons who are in need of emergency food, clothing, shelter or transportation and the ancillary costs associated with resolving the above emergency situations.

Purpose:

1. To assure that Band members in need of emergency assistance have a resource for help in their time of crisis.
2. To provide criteria for making decisions about approving emergency assistance applications.

Eligibility/Coverage Criteria:

1. Applicants must be a Mille Lacs Band member or parent/guardian of enrolled Band child(ren) who are in need of assistance.
2. Applicants must complete and sign an application form, In addition, a "release of information" form.
3. Applicants must present proof of need and the amount needed; eg. eviction notices, shut off notices moving cost estimates, doctors, appointment notices, proof of need will include verification of income and monthly bills.
4. All approved costs, will be paid directly to the vendor or will be set up by voucher to local grocery stores, gas stations, retail stores, etc.
5. The annual maximum available to any applicant is \$750.00.
6. Type of Services Covered:
 - a. Temporary shelter costs and/or first month rent and deposit up to \$750.00.
 - b. Vouchers for food at local grocery stores.
 - c. Travel expenses in case of family illness, medical appointments out-of-the area, etc.
 - d. Costs associated with necessary moving expenses for persons who wish to move back to the reservation or the surrounding area. (Primarily rental of a moving van and gas expenses.)
 - e. Partial payment for energy bills for persons not eligible for energy assistance.
 - f. 1st months rent and deposit.

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Eligibility/Coverage Criteria: (cont.)

7. Services not covered:

- a. Telephone bills
- b. Late rent
- c. Car/Insurance payments
- d. Court fines/bail
- e. Payments for relocation due to evictions caused by Alcohol or Drug activity is not allowed. A pre-authorized investigation will be used to seek documentation regarding eviction notice to determine if the cause of eviction is due to alcohol or drug activity.
- f. Any other services not covered.

Income Eligibility:

To determine eligibility for this program Mille Lacs Emergency Services will utilize the Federal poverty guidelines (see attached). Persons whose income is at or below the poverty guidelines or whose income exceeds the guidelines by no more than 75% will be eligible.

Also eligible will be persons who have a one time / infrequent, extraordinary need and require assistance temporarily. Persons in this category are those whose income exceeds 175% of poverty but cannot sustain an unexpected emergency need.

Repayment:

Persons whose income exceeds the 175% of poverty guidelines will be required to payback the money borrowed. These funds will be payable to the Emergency Assistance program with no interest. Payment arrangements must be made prior to receiving their grant. All emergency grants should be paid back within one year from the date of the grant.

Applicants who are required to pay back their emergency assistance grants, may apply for a second grant if another unexpected emergency arises within the same year if their first grant has been paid or partially paid.

Payment arrangements may include payroll deduction or repayment from the applicants' Christmas bonus.

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Good Faith Effort:

If the applicant is in need of assistance in paying for utility bills (NOT including heating fuel), their payment history immediately prior to the shut-off notice must show a "good faith" effort of having tried to pay at least a 10% portion of their electric, water or sewer bill each month.

Persons who allow their bills to lapse for three or more months and make no effort to pay even a portion of the bill will not receive assistance.

Follow-up:

Recipients of emergency assistance grants, for non-payment for energy bills or housing evictions, etc. will be required to attend a personal finance/management training and will be referred to Family Services for follow-up. At this time other referrals may be made also, including but not limited to: Housing; Jobs & Training; Commodities; Health Services; etc. Assistance will also be provided to set up budget payment plans for utilities and to inform the utility companies of households who would be at high risk if utilities were shut off.

For elders and handicapped persons, arrangements will be made with the Tribal Public Works department to read their gas meters on a semi-monthly basis so that propane levels never fall below 20%. When this happens, extra charges for delivery are added to their fuel bill and every effort must be made to avoid these additional charges.

***** Reminder: This program is not an entitlement for each Band Member to use every year. Rather, it is a fund to assist persons with valid Emergency needs.**

A detailed application form must be completed and a Release of Information form must be signed so that information on the application can be verified before the Review Board approves or denies each application.

Incomplete applications will not be processed until all information is received. If the application is not complete within 30 days of its original submission it will be deactivated and the applicant must reapply if assistance is needed in the future.

Form letters explaining Board decisions or reasons for applicants not processed will be sent to each applicant.

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Coverage:

The following constitute the new coverage guidelines for various types of assistance.

1. Emergency Housing:

- a. Persons whose home is destroyed or uninhabitable due to fire or other disaster.
- b. Persons who are homeless. eg. Band Members who have moved back and need shelter until they can find a place to rent, buy or until they find a job.
- c. Persons who need emergency housing due to remodeling of their home by the Mille Lacs Housing Authority must obtain financial assistance from housing, not Emergency Assistance Funds.

2. Clothing Needs:

- a. Persons whose clothing have been destroyed by fire, flood or other disaster.
- b. Persons who have a job interview and need proper/new clothes for the interview and for on-the-job which they have already obtained.
- c. Children whose parent is on AFDC and there is a need for basic clothing, shoes, pants, shirts, jackets, boots, etc.
- d. Clothes for babies of new parents before they can get on AFDC. (This need will be scrutinized very closely by the committee and applicants will be cautioned that if a serious emergency occurs later in the year there will be no monies left for them.) (Refer to clothes closet)

3. Food

- a. Homeless persons
- b. Persons unemployed for over 3 months whose Food Stamp vouchers have run out.
- c. Lost food stamps. **Must provide / verification of loss or theft (eg. - a police report)
- d. Persons unable to use local food shelf.

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Coverage (cont.)

4. Travel:

- a. Persons who need to travel away from their home because of a family medical emergency or death in the family.
- b. Gas money will be paid at the rate of \$0.27 / mile.
- c. Lodging and meals at the Federal per diem rate for the city / town to which they are traveling. The federal per diem will be paid for as many days as necessary but only up to a maximum of \$750.00 or the unused amount of the money the applicant has available to him/her.

5. Phone Services:

Generally, this is not a covered service. However, under certain circumstances we will assist elders and/or handicap persons who require a phone line for emergency medical reasons.

6. Auto Repairs:

Generally not covered. However, when a vehicle is mandated to obtain or retain employment, will assist with needed repairs. Persons needing assistance who are over income guidelines will be required to set up a repayment program. Persons who are successful in obtaining employment as a result of these repairs, they must set up a repayment program.

7. Energy Assistance (Fuel / Electrical)

- a. Households must provide documented need and must have exhausted all other sources of energy assistance before this program will pay. eg. Energy Assistance Program, vrending, etc.
- b. All applicants for energy assistance, must have been consistently making a 10% per month effort to try to pay their utility bills.

8. First Month Rent and Security Deposit

For persons who have returned to live on or around the reservation, or need to move for some other reason, may receive assistance with their first month Rent and Deposit.

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Appeals:

All persons applying for a grant under the Tribal Emergency Assistance program may appeal an adverse decision made by the Review Board.

The first appeal should be made in writing to the Review Board. Additional information, back-up or documentation of the need should be submitted to the Review Board. If there are any extenuating circumstances, these should be explained in the appeal.

If the Board upholds its' original decision, the applicant may make a second appeal to the Commissioner of Health & Human Services. This appeal should also be in writing, however the Commissioner may also request a personal interview with the applicant.