

+-----+  
 | INFORMATIONAL LETTER |  
 +-----+

TRANSMITTAL: 95 INF-31

TO: Commissioners of  
 Social Services

DIVISION: Economic  
 Security

DATE: August 25, 1995

SUBJECT: Frequent Reapplications for Emergency Home Relief

SUGGESTED

DISTRIBUTION: Income Maintenance Directors  
 Staff Development Coordinators

CONTACT PERSON: Call 1-800-343-8859  
 Income Support, Maureen Standish, extension 3-6555

ATTACHMENTS: None

FILING REFERENCES

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
		370.3			

The purpose of this letter is to clarify Department policy in the emergency Home Relief program. Department regulation 370.3(a) defines an emergency Home Relief or short-term case as "a case in which need is presumed to continue for a period of less than three months; provided, however, that cases in which frequent reapplications for assistance are made are not considered emergency or short-term." This last phrase has not been clearly defined or understood.

The intent of this phrase in the regulation is to prevent situations where individuals apply for emergency assistance, not because they have experienced a short-term, temporary emergency situation, (i.e., such as a fire or a medical emergency) but rather because they are unable to meet their normal everyday living expenses. They may be unable to meet these expenses because they are living beyond their means or because they should be applying for ongoing public assistance or other benefits (i.e., SSI, Unemployment Insurance Benefits, Social Security Benefits, etc.) to meet their recurring needs. As some local districts have observed, individuals may also make frequent reapplications for emergency assistance in order to circumvent the normal eligibility requirements, such as work rules, for ongoing public assistance.

An example of a situation where a person is applying for emergency assistance to meet normal living expenses is a person who comes in to apply for shelter arrears every few months. After investigating, the agency learns that the person pays some of the rent, but never pays it in full because income is being used to meet a car payment, car insurance and credit card debts. An example of a person who should be applying for additional benefits is a person who has a small social security survivors pension and is coming in at the end of every month to apply for emergency food vouchers. After investigating, the agency determines that the person would be financially eligible for on-going Home Relief.

When individuals make frequent reapplications for emergency assistance (for example, more than once within a three month period or a pattern of every few months), local districts should carefully review the reasons for the multiple applications to determine whether one of the above situations exists. If so, eligibility for assistance should be determined based upon the eligibility requirements for recurring public assistance. In other words, local districts should deny emergency assistance whenever, based upon the case circumstances, the district determines that an application for recurring assistance is more appropriate. In such cases, the application should be treated as an application for recurring assistance. The applicant does not have to complete another application, but the applicant must be provided with a notice of the denial of emergency assistance, as well as a notification of the action taken on the application for recurring assistance. Some of these applicants will not be eligible for either emergency assistance or recurring assistance.

NOTE: Because State Law requires payment of utility arrears for eligible households, households applying for utility arrears assistance are exempt from this provision.

Date August 25, 1995

Trans. No. 95 INF-31

Page No. 3

---

It should be noted that employable persons who receive emergency Home Relief can be required to work off their emergency benefit through workfare.

---

Patricia A. Stevens  
Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Economic Security