



STATE OF HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

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**State Reduces General Assistance Payments**

HONOLULU – Despite an improving economy, the Department of Human Services (DHS) is experiencing increasing enrollment in the General Assistance (GA) program. This is causing the Department to reduce per person benefits in order to keep the program within the budget appropriated by the state Legislature. Effective Feb. 1, 2013, GA payments will be reduced from \$319 to \$298 per person per month for an estimated 5,535 Hawaii beneficiaries.

“Although the nation and Hawaii continue to experience slow but steady economic growth, the benefits of a growing economy have not yet impacted many of DHS’ programs,” DHS Director Patricia McManaman said. “We continue to see increased enrollment across our programs, including GA.”

To help prevent future payment fluctuations, the DHS this year will introduce legislation that will allow the department to supplement the GA block grant with additional department resources. “GA reductions further jeopardize the health and safety of vulnerable adults already living on the edge,” Director McManaman explained.

The GA program provides cash benefits for clothing, shelter, food and other essentials for adults 18 through 64, without minor dependents. Beneficiaries must be temporarily disabled and not receiving Social Security assistance. To be eligible the beneficiary must have little or no income, not qualify for other categories of federal assistance, and be certified by the DHS medical board as unable to engage in substantial employment of at least 30 work hours per week for a period of at least 60 days.

The Hawaii Legislature funds the GA block grant program. The maximum allowance a GA recipient may receive is determined by dividing the amount of the Legislature’s appropriation by the number of general assistance recipients. If there is an increase in GA beneficiaries, the DHS must decrease the individual benefit to remain within the budget ceiling.

Increased enrollment triggered the reduction in monthly GA payments. In fiscal year 2011, the monthly benefit level was set initially at \$353, but following a 4.5 percent enrollment increase, benefits were reduced to \$319 per month in October 2011. Currently, the DHS is serving an additional 239 beneficiaries, which is another 4.5 percent increase over the previous year. Beneficiaries receive assistance for an average of 8.6 months.

For more information about the General Assistance program and other support services, visit the Department of Human Services website at: <http://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd>

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