

# **FACT SHEET**

January 24, 2007

**REQUEST: \$5 million ongoing and \$1 million one-time.**

## **UTAH'S GENERAL ASSISTANCE (GA) PROGRAM**

### **OVERVIEW**

GA is an important part of Utah's concerted effort to address homelessness. Providing only \$261 per month to singles and \$362 to couples, GA is the only source of temporary financial assistance for:

- people who are temporarily unemployable because of a short-term, medically verified physical or mental condition, or
- people whose disability is longer-term and who are waiting for approval of an SSI application.

Higher than expected caseloads in 2005 (2,300 cases) led to close scrutiny of the program. Caseload stress was found to be caused in substantial part by backlogs in processing initial applications for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) at Disability Determination Services (DDS). The Department of Workforce Services (DWS) and the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation (USOR) implemented solutions. By August 2006, the caseload was 1,700.

### **KEY FACTS**

DWS has taken steps to improve operations of the GA program and reduce caseload:

- DWS offices have implemented enhanced case management by GA specialists in Central Region Employment Centers who help SSI applicants navigate the complex application process and help participants resolve their conditions and get back to work.
- Intensive training for other service providers is helping SSI applicants submit more complete applications, eliminating delays caused by missing information.

GA recipients whose condition is temporary are required to develop and follow a plan to overcome their medical work limitation and return to work.

GA is time-limited to 24 out of any 60-month period.

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### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

***Is GA cost-effective for Utah, even though it is all state-funded?***

Yes, in two ways.

- If a GA participant is able to receive financial assistance and remain stabilized until he or she is deemed eligible for SSI, the Social Security Administration will then pay the Federal Benefit Rate (\$623 in 2007). This higher benefit can reduce the chances that the individual will become homeless or otherwise suffering effects of higher poverty.
- SSI beneficiaries are eligible for health care coverage through Medicaid (matched at \$3 to \$1), allowing them to receive care before their health problems escalate and become more costly emergencies.

***What other cost-savings efforts has DWS made to make GA funding stretch in FY07?***

