General Assistance Basic Facts

Eligibility. General Assistance (GA) is Minnesota’s cash assistance program for childless adults and some children that are not living with their parents. To be eligible for GA, an adult must be unable to work due to long- or short-term illness or disability.

Cases and Grants. In December 2011, there were 21,704 people receiving GA in 21,580 cases; 125 of these people were children. The maximum grant amount for an individual was $203. The average monthly grant amount was $165. Three-quarters of GA recipients also received Food Support with an average grant amount of $190.

Demographics. Fifty-four percent of all GA recipients were white; 63 percent never married; 64 percent were male; 93 percent were citizens; and 70 percent had a high school diploma. The average age of GA recipients was 43.

Relative to the state population, African Americans and American Indians were over-represented in the GA program. Thirty-one percent of all GA recipients were African American compared to 4 percent of all Minnesotans. Seven percent of all GA recipients were American Indian compared to 1 percent of all Minnesotans.

Housing. According to state administrative records, 13 percent of all GA recipients were homeless and 27 percent lived in a facility such as a group residential housing, chemical dependency treatment center, or State Operated Services facility.

Time on Assistance. The average length of the most current spell of GA eligibility was 17 months and the average cumulative number of months of eligibility over the past nine years was 25 months.

Employment and Earnings. Eleven percent of all GA recipients had wages reported to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Security’s Unemployment Insurance system in the fourth quarter of 2011. The average quarterly wage was $1,445.

For more information visit www.mn.gov/dhs and search for “economic supports,” or contact the DHS Transition to Economic Stability Division’s Research Unit at 651-431-4028.