



Monterey County

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Board Report

Legistar File Number: RES 18-117

August 28, 2018

Introduced: 8/20/2018

Current Status: Agenda Ready

Version: 1

Matter Type: BoS Resolution

Adopt Resolution to:

Consider adopting a resolution to implement a six-month time limit in any 12-month period for non-disabled, employable recipients of General Assistance in Monterey County.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

Consider adopting a resolution to reduce the length of benefits for applicants/recipients who are deemed employable, under the General Assistance Program, from twelve (12) months to six (6) months in any 12-month period, pursuant to legal authority granted under Welfare & Institutions Code 17001.5, with the change in benefits commencing September 1, 2018.

SUMMARY:

California Welfare and Institutions Codes (WIC) 17000 mandates each California county to have a General Assistance Program to aid its indigent population not eligible to receive other forms of cash assistance. Under WIC 17001.5 (a) (4) counties may adopt time limits in the General Assistance Program that prohibit employable recipients from receiving aid for more than six months in any rolling 12-month period, whether or not those months are consecutive. These time limits can only be applied to recipients who are not disabled and who have been offered an opportunity to attend job skills or job training sessions. If this resolution is adopted, the benefit change shall commence on September 1, 2018.

DISCUSSION:

In adoption of the Fiscal Year 2018-19 Budget, funding for the General Assistance Program was \$200,000 below forecasted needs. On July 24, 2018, the Department of Social Services brought forward a recommendation to implement 3-month time limits for non-disabled, employable recipients of General Assistance in order to keep program expenses within budgeted appropriations. Instead, the Board of Supervisor's authorized a six-month time limit policy change and the revised General Assistance resolution for the policy change is being brought back to the Board for approval.

Six-month time limits are authorized under WIC 17001.5 (a) (4). Under this section of the welfare and Institutions Code counties may:

17001.5. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, including, but not limited to, Section 17000.5, the board of supervisors of each county, or the agency authorized by the county charter, may do any of the following:

(4) Prohibit an employable individual from receiving aid under this part for more than three months in any 12-month period, whether or not the months are consecutive. This paragraph shall apply to aid received on or after the effective date of this paragraph. This paragraph shall apply only to those individuals who have been offered an opportunity to attend job skills or job training sessions.

Monterey County's General Assistance program provides medical exams for applicants and recipients to confirm disability, or for applicants and recipients who inform the Department of Social Services that they are unable to work, as required under the program. Individuals who are experiencing disability and are unable to work, receive help in applying for Supplemental Security Income (SSI/SSP) through the SSI Advocacy Program. Individuals who are not disabled are enrolled in the General Assistance Work Experience Program (GA-WEP).

The GA-WEP currently has 95 active cases, with an annual expenditure of \$387,600. These individuals are assigned to complete work hours at local worksites (The Food Bank for Monterey County, and Dorothy's Place for example) which assists these community partners with serving our mutual customers while building job skills for our General Assistance recipients to gain future gainful employment. With a \$200,000 budget shortfall in the current fiscal year for the General Assistance program, the Department of Social Services must recommend options to reduce program costs. Converting to a "six-month employable" model would reduce cash assistance for this population to six months in any 12-month period. The County would realize a 4-month cost savings of approximately \$129,200, still resulting in an estimated budget shortfall of \$70,800.

This time limit on assistance would result in GA-WEP recipients only having six months to secure employment and/or enhance their skill sets to move towards employment and self-sufficiency. After exhausting that six-month period, aid would be discontinued and recipients would run the risk of falling deeper into indigence. Additionally, several non-profit partners (e.g. The Food Bank for Monterey County and Dorothy's Place) who utilize GA-WEP participants to assist in meeting service needs would result in fewer GA-WEP participants available for work assignments placing an additional stressor on these community partners.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

County Counsel has reviewed the modified resolution as to form.

FINANCING:

Funding in the Fiscal Year 2018-19 Adopted Budget is under estimated by \$200,000 due to the County Administrative Budget Office reducing the Departments' augmentation request with the possibility of the board accepting a three-month time limit and therefore reducing the program costs.

The revised recommendation of a six-month time limit, if approved, will go into effect September 1, 2018 and will only result in 4 months of savings. Based upon the current caseload, the savings are estimated to be \$129,200, which will leave an estimated budget shortfall of \$70,800. The Department will work with the County Administrative Budget Office on funding strategies and will return back to the Board with a solution to the budget shortfall later in the fiscal year.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

Recommended actions would support the Department of Social Services in keeping program expenses within budget as part of the Administrative Strategic Initiative. However, it has been the County's mission to assist their indigent residents, and to ensure that all have a safety net of support as they work towards self-sufficiency - adopting a six-month employable program would lessen services under the Health & Human Services Strategic Initiative.

Check the related Board of Supervisors Strategic Initiatives:

- ☐ Economic Development
- ☒ Administration
- ☒ Health & Human Services
- ☐ Infrastructure
- ☐ Public Safety

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Approved by: Henry Espinosa, Acting Director of Social Services, x4430

Attachments: Attachment: Board Resolution and Attachment A - Revised General Assistance Board Policy

Attachments on file with the Clerk of the Board