



Department of Human Resources  
311 West Saratoga Street  
Baltimore MD 21201

## FIA ACTION TRANSMITTAL

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**TO: DIRECTORS, LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
DEPUTY/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR FAMILY INVESTMENT  
FAMILY INVESTMENT SUPERVISOR AND ELIGIBILITY STAFF**

**FROM: KEVIN M. MCGUIRE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**RE: WELFARE AVOIDANCE GRANT (WAG) REVIEWS**

**PROGRAM AFFECTED: TEMPORARY CASH ASSISTANCE**

**ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF PROGRAMS**

**Summary:**

To meet the WAG monitoring requirement, FIA's central office will review each local department's WAG Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) or WAG Plan and review a sample of all local department issued WAGs. Both audit findings and central office reviews of WAGs issued by the local departments indicate that staff do not always follow correct policy and procedure when issuing WAGs to customers.

WAGs are intended to help meet a compelling need for a short period of time, not to meet ongoing living expenses for an extended number of months.

**WAG Policy Reminder:**

Developing a Family Independence Plan with the family identifies the goals and the steps to reach the goal that the family must follow. The family has the opportunity to see how a WAG fits into the Plan. The purpose of a WAG is to meet the family's immediate and compelling need and prevent them from going on Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) or to assist a family in getting off of TCA. It is a short-term, non-recurrent, cash payment. A WAG should help the family gain or maintain independence from TCA.

Although local flexibility exists in developing the individual local department WAG policy, local departments must follow specific State requirements. Please review your WAG SOPs and update them accordingly to ensure that all staff understand and follow the correct policy. Following is State policy for issuing WAGs:

1. The customer must apply for TCA. During the TCA interview the case manager and the customer determine whether a WAG is appropriate for the customer's situation. Customers cannot apply for a WAG.
2. WAGs and Emergency Assistance to Families with Children (EAFC) are not interchangeable.
3. The case manager determines the amount of the WAG based only on the amount required for the immediate and compelling need. You cannot issue a WAG for the difference between the amount remaining from the maximum allowed and the amount needed.
4. An assessment must be completed for the family. This assessment includes a review of prior narration on CARES. The assessment questions also provide the information for the case narration and include:
  - Why is the customer applying for or receiving TCA?
  - Who is in the household?
  - What is the income in the household?
  - Why will the WAG help the household remain off or leave TCA?
  - How did the family manage in the past? Are there contributions to the household? Are relatives/friends paying any expenses?
  - What caused the situation that required the customer to come in and apply for TCA? What is the compelling need?
  - Do the adults in the family have jobs?
  - What is the family's income and what is its source?
  - Does the family have resources to meet the need?
  - Is the need an allowed item in the local department's Plan?
  - What supports does the family have as they move to independence?
  - If the need is met with a WAG, will the family gain independence or remain off of TCA?
5. The case manager must develop an **Independence Plan** with the family including the WAG and what the WAG will accomplish.
6. The customer and case manager must sign the **WAG Agreement (or WAG contract in some local departments)**. It must clearly state the need, amount, the time period the WAG covers and that TCA benefits may not be paid during that time period.
7. The **Rights and Responsibilities** statement must be signed by the customer and case manager.
8. Much of the narration comes from the assessment. The narration must clearly state all of the items in #3 above and the following:
  - The time period the WAG will cover.

- The amount of the WAG and an itemized list of what it covered including the amount of each item (when the WAG covers multiple items such as car registration and car insurance).
- Who approved the WAG?
- How was the WAG paid? (check to vendor and/or check to customer).
- The specific needs that the WAG is intended to cover.
- The WAG grant amount that is to be issued.
- Terms of technical eligibility that must be met.
- Dates the WAG covers and the period of TCA ineligibility.
- The Independence Plan, WAG Agreement/Contract and Rights and Responsibilities forms were completed.

9. The period of TCA ineligibility must be entered on each member of the AU's DEM1 screen (i.e., WAG 6/08 – 1/09 indicates 8 months of TCA ineligibility).

**Note:** The handouts on Welfare Avoidance Grants that were provided at last year's Wizard of Work training conference are good tools for staff to use to make sure they are following policy and procedure correctly. They are available upon request to anyone who would like a copy.

**Reminder:** In calculating the number of months for the WAG, any fraction remaining constitutes a full month of TCA ineligibility.

### **CARES Procedures:**

1. Before denying the TCA application, complete **option "L- Add-a-Program"**, to add the WAG case to the pending TCA case.
2. On the **"INCH"** screen type "IF" in the program field and type "R" in the type field. This identifies the case as a WAG.
  - WAG cases must be interviewed, processed and finalized like all FIA programs.
3. During "Interview – **Option O**", change the issuance method from "BEBT" to "BCHK" on the "STAT" screen.
  - Proceed through the interview screens and complete the required fields accordingly.
4. During "Process – **Option P**", on the DEM1 screen, in the "Birthplace City" field, enter the word "WAG" and the month and year that TCA ineligibility will end, based on the number of months the WAG will cover.
  - Enter on each AU member's DEM1 screen.)
5. A Supervisor must finalize the WAG.

6. On the “**SPEC**” screen, enter the WAG amount and change the vendor field from “N” to “Y”.
7. Enter the vendor information on the VEND screen.
8. Confirm the benefit for the current month. The grant amount for the ongoing month automatically defaults to .00 (zero).
9. Deny the TCA application with reason code “515- Previously received WAG for this period of time”

**Inquiries:**

Please direct WAG policy questions to Marilyn Lorenzo, TCA Program Manager, at 410-767-7333 or Gretchen Simpson, TCA Lead Program Analyst, at 410-767-7937.

cc: DHR Executive Staff  
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