

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES MANUAL

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115 REFERRALS

Many persons who are eligible for public assistance programs may qualify for other community services. Public assistance responsibilities include referrals to these agencies. For more information about programs administered by the Division of Public Assistance (DPA), see the program manuals. Additionally, the ACash, Food, and Medical Assistance≡ booklet provides a good overview of DPA programs..

115-1 SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME

The federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program is designed to provide needy adults who are blind, disabled, or 65 years of age or older with the financial means to maintain their health, dignity, and independence.

The SSI program is federally-funded and is administered by the Social Security Administration. Most Adult Public Assistance (APA) recipients receive monthly State benefits as a supplement to SSI or Social Security payments. For this reason, most persons applying for APA benefits must also apply for the federal benefits, although it is possible to receive APA only.

The Social Security Administration has office in Ketchikan, Fairbanks, Juneau, and Anchorage. They also have an extensive travel schedule throughout Alaska which takes them to all villages at least annually.

115-2 FAMILY AND YOUTH SERVICES

The Division of Family and Youth Services of the Department of Health and Social Services is an agency which is responsible for planning, developing and delivering a variety of social services designed to assist Alaskans to achieve and maintain an acceptable social condition, with special attention given to low-income families.

A. AVAILABLE SERVICES

Services available to eligible families through the Division of Family and Youth Services include:

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- Information and referral services;
- Individual and family counseling including family planning;
- Child protective services including day care support, foster care and homemaker support; and
- Adult protective services including homemaker support.

Clients interested in applying for such assistance should be referred to the local office of the Division of Family and Youth Services.

B. REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

All Division of Public Assistance personnel are required by Alaska Statute (AS 47.17.120) and federal regulations to report each case of observed or suspected child abuse or neglect to the Division of Family and Youth Services.

If at any time any Division of Public Assistance staff member observes a situation which they have reason to believe a child is suffering abuse or neglect, the following actions must be taken:

1. The observations and suspicion must be recorded in detail on a Report of Contact form. The record must be as specific and factual as possible. For example: "3/15/77. While she was waiting in the office for an interview, I observed Mrs. X pinch her baby's arm twice, apparently to make it stop crying. The baby's upper arms and his cheeks appeared to be severely bruised and scratched".
2. **Immediately** after the written report is completed, the person making the report must telephone the nearest office of the Division of Family and Youth Services, give them an oral report of what was observed, and provide whatever additional information is requested.
3. When the call is completed, the name of the Division of Family and Youth Services person to whom the report was made, and the date and time of the call are to be entered on the Report of Contact, which is then signed, dated and placed in the case file.

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Because of the potential consequences to an abused or neglected child, the report must be made without delay. If the situation is one in which the observer cannot be certain that abuse or neglect is occurring, but they merely suspect it may be occurring, they should discuss their suspicion with their supervisor. However, no Division of Public Assistance staff member should ever be reluctant to make a report and to thereby allow the Social Services Worker to determine for themselves if action is necessary.

Anyone who reports a suspected case of child abuse or neglect in good faith is granted immunity from civil and criminal court action, even if the report proves to be erroneous. Also, there is no violation of confidentiality in reporting a case of suspected abuse or neglect to the Division of Family and Youth Services, no matter what Division of Public Assistance program is involved or the client's status with that program.

C. COMMON SYMPTOMS OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT

The following are three common symptoms of child abuse and neglect:

1. Repeated injuries, such as numerous bruises, welts, burns or bites. Parents may seem unconcerned, or offer unlikely explanations of how the injuries occurred or even deny their occurrence.
2. Neglected appearance, children who appear badly nourished, quite ill or always unhealthy, or are frequently inadequately clothed. Over neatness can also be a sign of abuse or an attempt to disguise it.
3. Overly critical parents, who appear to frequently and shortly verbally or physically punish or criticize or correct their children, often when there is no indication that correction or punishment is deserved.

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115-3 COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS DAY CARE

The Alaska Department of Community and Regional Affairs funds and administers a day care program through contract with various private and municipal agencies throughout Alaska. Day care assistance is provided to training and working parents on a sliding scale of cost.

115-4 ALASKA LEGAL SERVICES

Alaska Legal Services Corporation provides a broad variety of services to lower income individuals who meet the Alaska Legal Services income eligibility criteria. There are Alaska Legal Services offices in most major Alaskan communities.

Clients who express the need for legal services such as representation or aid in divorce proceedings, lawsuits, or DPA fair hearings can be referred to the local office of Alaska Legal Services. Alaska Legal Services is 100% funded by state monies.

115-5 FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES

Family planning services are made available to all members of AFDC applicant and recipient households without regard to age or marital status. Family planning services are paid for out of Medicaid funds.

At the time of application, as well as at the time of denial of application, opening of grant, change of grant, and closure of grant, it is required that the Eligibility Technician inform the client in writing of their eligibility for family planning services. Applicants should be informed that acceptance of any of these services is voluntary and does not in any way affect the individual's eligibility for financial assistance or for other services offered through the Department of Health and Social Services.

The Eligibility Technician should offer to refer all inquiring applicants and recipients to the Division of Family and Youth Services for assistance in obtaining information, counseling or educational services or to a Division of Public Health family planning medical provider of the client's choice. All offers of Family Planning services, as well as actual referrals for information or services, must be documented in the case file.

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115-6 CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

The purpose of the Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) of the Alaska Department of Revenue, is to promote parental responsibility by enforcing court orders of child support, collecting the support payments, and disbursing these payments to the caretaker relatives of children. It is the responsibility of CSED with respect to the AFDC program to receive the child support payments on behalf of the AFDC recipients and disburse them to the State Treasury and Federal Government. By doing so, the costs to the taxpayer of the AFDC program are partially reduced and the AFDC household is not dependent on the absent parent for part of its monthly non-AFDC income.

The CSED will initiate collection activities against the absent parents of children who are not making contributions. It will also identify and locate absent parents when such action will be to the children's best interests. This service is available to anyone. Non-AFDC households should also be referred to CSED.

115-7 EARLY AND PERIODIC SCREENING, DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT (EPSDT)

This element of the Medicaid Program is basically a preventive health program for children of eligible low-income families. The EPSDT program is administered by the Division of Public Health. The objective is to identify children who have disease or abnormalities and to prevent or correct handicaps by procuring appropriate treatment and rehabilitative services as early as possible.

EPSDT is available to all persons under 21 who are receiving, or who are eligible to receive AFDC/Medicaid benefits; however, parental consent is required for the coverage of non-emancipated minors.

Screening covers: physical and mental history, assessment of growth, development, physical defects, ear-nose and throat, cardiac, anemia, sickle cell, lead poisoning, tuberculosis, diabetes, infection, urinary disorders, nutrition, immunization, vision and hearing testing.

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As with Medicaid, the recipient has I.D. cards or coupons to present to the health care provider. For more information see the Medicaid manual.

115-8 BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS GENERAL ASSISTANCE

A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance (BIA-GA) program is to provide cash assistance for certain specified basic needs of individual Alaska Natives and American Indians, or families which include Alaska Natives and American Indians. Covered needs include such items as food, clothing, shelter, and utilities; burial assistance may also be included as an essential need.

The program is administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs local agency offices, or its tribal contractors. Because DPA cash assistance programs, except General Relief Assistance, are a prior resource to BIA-GA, BIA will screen applicants and make referrals to the AFDC, APA, and SSI programs.

This manual section provides DPA staff with basic information about BIA-GA. It also guides DPA staff in coordinating eligibility determinations for state public assistance programs with the BIA-GA program.

B. BIA ORGANIZATION AND CONTRACTORS

In Alaska, the BIA-GA program is administered by five BIA agency offices and its tribal contractors. The BIA regional agency offices are located in Anchorage, Bethel, Juneau, Fairbanks, and Nome.

C. BIA-GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

BIA-GA provides cash assistance to eligible Alaska Natives and American Indians in the amount of the unmet basic need.

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1. **Application Requirements:**

A client makes application for BIA-GA on a form prescribed by the BIA; the application must be complete with verification of resources and income of all household members.

2. **Eligibility Determination:**

BIA must make an eligibility determination within 45 days from receipt of an application; financial assistance is prorated from the application receipt date.

3. **Basic BIA-GA Eligibility Requirements are:**

- a) Applicants for BIA-GA who appear to be eligible for assistance from another program, including the AFDC, APA, and SSI programs, are required to apply for those assistance programs. Application is not required for the Alaska General Relief Assistance program.
- b) To be eligible to be included in a BIA-GA case as a household member, an individual must be:
 - A member of a tribe or Alaska Native Village recognized by the U.S. Government or a one-fourth degree or more blood descendant of a member of an Indian tribe or Alaska Native Village; and
 - A resident of an Alaska tribal entity area located in a BIA agency jurisdiction; and
 - A U.S. citizen.
- c) Individuals in the following categories are not eligible to be included in a BIA-GA case:
 - Recipients of AFDC.
 - Recipients of SSI, and members of their household whose needs are included in the payment.

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- Dependent children whose needs are met through receipt of Social Security or VA survivors' benefits.
 - Individuals who are neither members of federally recognized tribes or Alaska Native Villages, nor one-fourth or more blood descendants of a member of a federally recognized tribe or Alaska Native Village.
- d) Resources: Applicants and recipients who are included in the BIA-GA household may retain resources up to \$1,000. Liquid resources in excess of the resource limit count as income in determining eligibility for and the amount of the BIA-GA payment. Many assets considered as resources by BIA-GA are similar to the resources counted by DPA programs; BIA-GA considers some resources, such as vehicles, differently. BIA exempts the following resources:
- Capital assets used in the production of income for self-support.
 - The client's home.
 - All insurance policies.
- e) Income: All earned or unearned income is counted as available income in the month received and, if still available, as income in the months thereafter, except for the \$1,000 of excluded resources. Income is the money amount or in-kind benefit received from employment, business, property, retirement, free housing and utilities, and other sources, which is actually available to meet the need. Applicants and recipients must provide verification of all income.
- f) Determination of net income: BIA determines the household's net income by deducting certain allowable taxes, health insurance and work-related expenses from gross earned and unearned income.

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- g) The following incomes are disregarded:
- Judgment payments distributed to Indian tribes, up to \$2,000 per person per payment;
 - The first \$2,000 of cash distributions per individual per year made by Native corporations to Alaska Natives under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act;
 - Food Stamps;
 - Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance Payments;
 - BIA Housing Improvement Program benefits;
 - American Red Cross, federal, or state disaster relief funds.
- h) Eligibility Notice: BIA-GA provides applicants and recipients a written notice of all decisions. The notice advises applicants or recipients of their legal and hearing rights, provides a statement of the action being taken, specifies the amount of benefits and benefit month, specifies the length of the certification period, and states the effective date and the reasons for the decision. The BIA caseworker gives notice 20 days before the effective date, if the action is to reduce, suspend, or terminate financial assistance.
- i) Redeterminations: The BIA worker reviews the BIA-GA case at least once every 6 months depending on the stability of the household's situation. If the household is potentially eligible for AFDC, APA, or SSI, the case is reviewed every month.

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The recipient must complete a review application. The BIA worker makes a home visit or personal contact, reviews the need for continued assistance, and determines eligibility and the amount of the assistance payment.

D. BIA-GA BENEFIT

1. Cash Assistance:

The BIA-GA payment standards follow the Alaska AFDC payment standards. See Addendum A for the BIA-GA Payment Standards.

The BIA-GA benefit is paid on a monthly basis; the BIA-GA monthly payment amount is the difference between the applicable payment standard and all net income and resources not disregarded by BIA-GA.

BIA-GA payments are made by U. S. Treasury warrant; the warrant does not have a stub. Delivery of the benefit payment may be made directly to the recipient, or delivery of the benefit payment may be made to a vendor if BIA determines that the family may not apply the payment for its intended use. BIA anticipates making very few vendor payments.

2. Burial Assistance:

BIA-GA burial assistance pays \$1,250 for basic burial services which include preparation and embalming, the casket, and funeral home services (similar to the state GRA burial assistance basic \$1,250 benefit). In limited circumstances, BIA-GA will pay for transportation. (See section 115-12E(7) regarding dual eligibility for BIA-GA burial assistance and GRA burial assistance.)

E. BIA-GA EFFECTS ON DPA PROGRAMS

The BIA-GA program is a cash assistance program based on the needs of the recipients which affects other needs-based public assistance programs.

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1. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC):

AFDC counts BIA-GA cash assistance paid on behalf of individuals whose needs are included in an AFDC grant as unearned income for the month of intended use. If a BIA-GA payment covers individuals who are not members of the AFDC economic unit, prorate the BIA-GA payment evenly among the members of the BIA-GA household and count the amount attributed to the members of the AFDC economic unit in the AFDC budget calculation.

AFDC considers BIA burial assistance a complementary program benefit and disregards it as income.

2. APA/SSI programs:

Both APA and SSI count BIA-GA as income in the month of receipt. If a BIA-GA payment covers individuals who are not members of the APA economic unit, prorate the BIA-GA payment evenly among the members of the BIA-GA household and count the amount attributed to the members of the APA economic unit in the APA budget calculation.

3. Food Stamp Program:

The Food Stamp Program counts BIA-GA as unearned income if received by the household or vendor in the month of intended use. If the BIA-GA payment is received by the household or vendor after the month of intended use, the payment is considered a nonrecurring lump sum payment, which is exempt as income but counts as a resource in the month of receipt.

If a BIA-GA payment covers individuals who are not members of the food stamp household, prorate the BIA-GA payment evenly among the members of the BIA-GA household and count the amount attributed to the members of the food stamp household in the food stamp budget calculation.

The BIA-GA burial vendor payment is considered an excluded vendor payment for food stamp purposes.

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4. Medicaid:

Medicaid follows either AFDC or APA rules to establish eligibility as applicable to the case. Refer to AFDC or APA policies for how to treat BIA-GA income.

5. General Relief Assistance:

General Relief Assistance (GRA) is a state-funded emergency need program and BIA-GA is a prior resource.

If a GRA applicant who is potentially eligible for BIA-GA has an emergent need and is otherwise eligible in the first month of GRA application, GRA benefits will be authorized. At the first interview, the Eligibility Technician must refer the potentially eligible BIA-GA applicant to BIA-GA for assistance; the Eligibility Technician will not pend the first month's GRA benefits for proof of BIA-GA application.

If a GRA applicant who is potentially eligible for BIA-GA applies for a second month of GRA, has an emergent need, is otherwise eligible, shows proof of application for BIA-GA and demonstrates that BIA-GA is unable to assist in time to meet the emergent need, GRA benefits will be authorized.

GRA counts BIA-GA cash assistance paid on behalf of individuals whose needs are included in a GRA household as unearned income in the month of receipt. If BIA-GA payment covers non-GRA household members, prorate the BIA-GA payment evenly among the members of the BIA-GA household, and count the amount attributed to the members of the GRA household in the GRA eligibility determination.

6. General Relief Medical Assistance:

BIA-GA is not a prior resource to General Relief Medical. However, BIA-GA payments count as unearned income in determining eligibility for General Relief Medical assistance.

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7. General Relief Burial:

BIA burial assistance is a prior resource to state General Relief burial assistance to the extent that the BIA-GA burial assistance benefit is available to an eligible Alaska Native or American Indian. For dual-eligible applicants, the state GRA program pays for burial assistance for services covered by the GRA program which are not covered by the BIA-GA program.

BIA-GA payments received by legally responsible relatives who lived with the deceased at the time of death count as unearned income in determining eligibility for General Relief burial assistance.

F. BIA/DPA INFORMATION EXCHANGE

BIA, its tribal contractors, and DPA will exchange information regarding applicants for and recipients of BIA-GA and DPA programs in order to coordinate between programs and to provide accurate and timely delivery of benefits.

1. Release of Information:

The BIA-GA applicant completes a release of information form, giving permission for DPA and BIA to exchange eligibility information; the signed release is filed in the BIA-GA case record as part of BIA standard operating procedures. It is **not** necessary for DPA to obtain a copy of the release form to release information to a BIA-GA agency or contractor.

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2. Disclosure of Information (Confidentiality):

BIA and/or its tribal contractors and DPA may exchange eligibility information, such as an applicant's or recipient's name, household member's name, social security number, program(s) applied for, application date; case status, such as open, pending or denied and the reason for the action; if opened, the benefit month(s), amount and date of payment(s), and length of certification period. All information will be treated as confidential by the agencies involved and used solely for the purpose of determining eligibility for the BIA-GA or DPA assistance programs.

DPA gives applicants an appointment receipt at the time an identifiable application is received in a district office. The applicant may use this as proof of application for a DPA program.

BIA provides applicants and recipients written notice of the initial BIA-GA eligibility determination, of changes in BIA-GA benefits, and of termination of BIA-GA benefits.

BIA will send the appropriate DPA district office a copy of **each** BIA-GA approval notice along with a copy of the completed "Application for Assistance/Services", BIA 5-6601, (Addendum D) page of the application [this page contains a list of household members and Social Security Numbers]. DPA district offices will review these notices to assure that BIA-GA payments are correctly considered in the determination of eligibility for DPA benefits.

To facilitate the exchange of information, BIA will batch its requests for information to the DPA offices. DPA and BIA will complete the exchange of information within one working day of receipt of any request. The information exchange may be made in writing, by telephone, or by facsimile machine, at the discretion of the regional manager.

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G. COORDINATION OF BENEFIT DELIVERY

1. General Program Coordination:

BIA-GA may pay benefits pending an applicant's determination of eligibility for DPA cash assistance programs. DPA and BIA workers must coordinate the issuance of benefits to assure that BIA-GA benefits are not paid to AFDC or APA recipients, and that any BIA-GA benefits paid are correctly budgeted in the DPA case. This coordination should be handled by phone and documented in the case record.

Each DPA district office will establish a contact person in the office to respond to requests for information from the BIA. The BIA will, in turn, establish a contact person in each of its offices to respond to DPA requests for information.

Neither DPA nor BIA will delay processing one of its own applications because the other party has not yet made an eligibility determination on an application for benefits from the other agency.

2. Burial Assistance Programs:

DPA and BIA-GA workers must coordinate the issuance of burial assistance benefits for dual-eligible Alaska Natives or American Indians to ensure that state GRA burial costs are correctly paid for burial services covered by the state GRA program which are not covered by BIA-GA burial assistance.

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ADDENDUM A

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

GENERAL ASSISTANCE PAYMENT STANDARDS

Effective 1/1/95

The following budget schedule has been adopted to follow State of Alaska Aid to Families with Dependent Children standards per 25 CFR 20.1, definitions and authorities as applicable.

<u>NUMBER OF CHILDREN</u>	<u>WITH ONE PARENT</u>	<u>WITH TWO PARENTS</u>
1	\$ 821	\$ 923
2	\$ 923	\$1,025
3	\$1,025	\$1,127
4	\$1,127	\$1,229
5	\$1,229	\$1,331

For each additional child add\$ 102 \$ 102

CHILDREN ONLY - NO ADULTS INCLUDED

1	\$ 452
2	\$ 554
3	\$ 656
4	\$ 758
5	\$ 860
6	\$ 962
7	\$1,064

For each additional child add \$ 102

ADULTS ONLY (OVER 18) - HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT CHILDREN

Individual, Independent Living\$ 514
 Individual(s) in Another's Household \$ 386