

GMHC Client Fact Sheet

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE (PA) AND HIV/AIDS SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (HASA, FORMERLY DASIS)

What is Public Assistance?

Public Assistance (PA), also known as Welfare, is a program that provides cash assistance and Food Stamps to people who have limited or no income and resources. PA assists people who are not disabled or who are HIV positive but not symptomatic enough to be served by HASA. In New York City, PA is administered by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). Applications for assistance are filed at local Income Support centers which are located throughout New York City. Your PA caseworker should also assist in obtaining Medicaid and Food Stamp benefits (see Medicaid and Food Stamp fact sheets).

PA provides Family Assistance (FA), for up to five years, to families where there is one or more dependent child through a federal program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Individuals and childless couples are assisted through the Safety Net Assistance (SNA) program in the form of cash assistance. If you are an SNA recipient and HIV positive, PA will provide cash assistance with no time limits unless you are determined to be abusing illegal substances or engaging in habitual consumption of alcohol, in which case, you would be eligible for Public Assistance only through the voucher system. SNA recipients who are not HIV positive receive PA cash assistance with a two year lifetime limit and after that they would only be eligible to receive for the most part, non-cash assistance such as direct vendor or two party checks for shelter or utility payments.

Who does Public Assistance work with?

PA serves all eligible individuals and families who need help, regardless of HIV status. However, PA will pay enhanced rent (rent which exceeds the standard allowance) only to residents of New York State who are HIV positive and symptomatic. It is important to note that anybody who resides in New York City (the area that HASA serves) who was eligible for enhanced rent from regular PA should now be eligi-

ble for enhanced rent **plus** enhanced nutritional and transportation PA benefits through HASA. This is because of the HASA local law #49 which was passed in August 1997. PA allows you to have resources (money in the bank, IRAs, CDs, investments etc.) of up to \$2,000 OR \$3,000 if there is someone in the household who is 60 years of age or older. Your car usually does not count. You can have a burial account, at a bank, of up to \$1,500. A clinic, Health Service Systems (HS Systems), tests and reviews an individual's HIV-related symptoms. If they determine that you are eligible, they will inform PA who will provide enhanced rent payments. (If you live in NYC, PA should refer you to HASA.)

IMPORTANT: HS Systems is required by law to inform you about testing for HIV and also has a professional responsibility to discuss with you the details of any other testing they plan to do. If you have any doubts about what tests you are being asked to take, ask for an explanation.

How much will I receive for rent, nutritional needs and transportation (food and other allowance)?

What follows are two examples of monthly Public Assistance budgets for Individuals. Family allowances are higher. If you are a family and would like to know what Public Assistance would allow for you, we can calculate the budget. For information, please call the GMHC Advocacy Helpline at 212/367-1125.

Example 1:

PA budget for an individual who is HIV negative or HIV positive but not symptomatic:	
Maximum food and other allowance	\$137
Maximum rent allowance	<u>\$215</u>
Total monthly allowance (would be reduced if you have other income)	\$352
Plus up to \$155 in Food Stamps	

If your rent is higher than \$215, you would have to get a third party to agree to pay the amount that PA is not willing to approve.

Example 2:

Enhanced Rent PA budget for an individual who is HIV positive and symptomatic and lives outside of NYC:

Maximum food and other allowance	\$137
Maximum enhanced rent allowance	<u>\$480</u>
Total monthly allowance (would be reduced if you have other income)	\$617
Plus up to \$155 in Food Stamps	

If your rent is over the maximum of \$480, you could request that your PA caseworker ask for a special approval which may or may not be granted. If it is not granted, you would have to get a third party to agree to pay the amount that PA will not approve.

What is HASA and whom do they serve?

The HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) is part of the Human Resources Administration (HRA). In an effort to expand services to people with HIV/AIDS, the HRA renamed the Division of AIDS Services and Income Support. The new name is **HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA)**.

Any person who has or has ever had AIDS or certain HIV symptoms as defined by the New York State AIDS Institute (list available through GMHC Advocacy Helpline) is eligible for services through HASA which may include benefits such as enhanced nutritional, transportation and rent allowances from Public Assistance. HASA also provides housing assistance to those who are homeless or potentially homeless.

HASA works with people who either have:

- 1) Not enough monthly income to pay rent, purchase food, pay for utilities and whose resources (money in the bank, IRAs, CDs, investments etc.) are less than \$2,000 OR \$3,000 if there is a household member who is 60 years of age or older. Your car usually does not count. You can have a burial account, at a bank, of up to \$1,500.
- 2) a one time emergency situation (rent arrears or utility bills that can't be paid);
- 3) are homeless or pending eviction;
- 4) are in need of homecare (need assistance with activities of daily living and will rely on Medicaid to pay for it).

Unlike PA, HASA gives more personal service to its clients. A caseworker is assigned to act as an advocate and counselor and to assist with benefits such as

enhanced Public Assistance, Food Stamps and Medicaid. The caseworker will come to visit you at home and if necessary, the caseworker can process the request for homecare and nursing services. This request is usually routed through Visiting Nurse Services.

Where do I go to apply?

Bring a diagnosis letter, M11Q form (medical request for home care), or HASA referral form, which must be signed by your physician and include the physician's license number to:

HASA/ServiceLine
400 Eighth Avenue, at 30th Street
New York, NY 10001
212/971-0626

Note: The serviceline will confirm this information by calling your physician.

If your physician or your social worker does not have an M11Q or has a referral form, you can contact the GMHC Advocacy Helpline at 212/367-1125.

How much will I receive for enhanced rent, nutritional needs and transportation (food and other allowance)?

What follows is an example of an enhanced HASA monthly PA budget for an individual. Family allowances are higher. If you are a family and would like to know what HASA would allow for you, we can calculate the budget. For information, please call the GMHC Advocacy Helpline at 212/367-1125.

Maximum food and other allowance (higher than PA pays to non-HASA clients)	\$330
Maximum rent allowance	<u>\$480</u>
Total monthly allowance (would be reduced if you have other income)	\$810
Plus up to \$	
in Food Stamps	

If your rent is higher than \$480, you could request that your HASA caseworker ask for a special approval for the full amount of your rent which may or may not be granted. If it is not granted, you would have to get a third party to agree to pay the amount that HASA is not willing to approve.

If you are a GMHC client, you can request that the Advocacy Unit advocate on your behalf to increase your chances of being approved for the full amount of your rent.

What if I am homeless?

HASA must provide you with emergency housing in a commercial SRO or hotel and then assist you in finding permanent housing. Be sure to ask your HASA caseworker to help you prepare a housing application that will be submitted to the HASA Housing Unit. You may also want to look for an affordable apartment on your own. The GMHC Client Advocacy Unit can provide you with a housing packet that includes the Section 8 rent limits that HASA has adopted for HASA clients seeking permanent housing. The packet also includes a realtor's list and descriptions of other housing options.

What if I don't agree with a HASA decision or action on my case?

As a result of a lawsuit, HASA has created a new unit, the Fair Hearing and Appeals Unit (FHAU). The new unit gives HASA clients the right to a formal appeal regarding HASA decisions and actions.

HASA clients can request a FHAU hearing by filing a client Request for Hearing Form (available through the GMHC Client Advocacy Unit or by calling the FHAU at 212/620-9893). The forms are also required to be at all HASA centers and at the HASA Serviceline at 400 8th Avenue at 30th Street. A hearing with the FHAU (or at your home or hospital room if necessary) will be scheduled within 21 days. However, the FHAU claims that they will try to resolve the complaint before the hearing.

The existing fair hearing system is run by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) and covers only statewide benefits. OTDA fair hearings therefore cannot address benefits received exclusively by HASA clients in New York City, such as the enhanced Public Assistance benefits, intensive management services, and housing placement Assistance.

The Client Advocacy Unit at GMHC is available to assist you. For more information, please call our Helpline: 212/367-1125, Wednesdays, 2:00 to 5:30 P.M. Walk-in services are available Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.