Struggling to Pay for Basic Necessities?

General Assistance (GA) may be able to help

What is GA?
It is a program in state law that is run by Maine's towns. It helps those without other resources to pay for necessities such as:

- rent/mortgage
- electricity
- heat
- food
- medicine

Where do I apply for GA?
Towns handle applications. Larger towns have specialized General Assistance or social service offices to take applications. Smaller towns often have the town clerks take applications.

What if I am Homeless or “couch surfing”?
You can apply in the town where you are currently located. Towns can’t make you apply in the town you came from or where you last lived.

What do I need to apply for GA?

- You will need to show you do not have resources to pay for basic necessities.
- If you have applied for asylum and waiting for a decision, you will need to show any of the following forms of proof:
  - A notice of receipt
  - The first page of an asylum application
- If you are currently applying for asylum but have not submitted your application, you will need to show proof of pursuing an immigration process. You will need to show the following proof:
  - Assigned form (called an affidavit) saying you are pursuing immigration process.
  - A notice to appear in court (if you applied through immigration court)
  - Alien number (ONLY IF YOU HAVE ONE)
  - Date of your hearing (ONLY IF YOUR HEARING IS SCHEDULED)
• Applying for rent? GA will want to contact your landlord to complete paperwork and possibly inspect your apartment.

What if the town office accepting GA applications is closed?
You should be able to apply for emergency assistance 24-7, and every town must provide information on how to do that. Due to the Covid-19 civil emergency, every application should be treated as if it is an emergency application right now. If you have any trouble accessing your GA office or applying, you can call the State GA Hotline at: 1-800-442-6003

I Tried Applying, but they never let me complete an application. What Do I Do?

EVERYONE HAS A RIGHT TO COMPLETE AN APPLICATION FOR GA. If you are not eligible, a town should still let you apply. The town then must give you a written denial.

So, when the town says: You have the right to say: And ask for a written decision:

You’re probably not eligible... I’d like to apply anyway.

If you follow the above steps and you still aren’t able to apply, or you didn’t receive a written decision, contact the State GA Hotline at: 1-800-442-6003. You can also contact Pine Tree Legal Assistance or Maine Equal Justice.

I Applied for GA but Got a Written Denial. Now What?
Once you get a written denial you only have 5 days to submit a written appeal.

What do I put in the written appeal?
You can hand write the appeal. Simple is ok. Say something like:

“I am requesting a fair hearing.”
-and-
“I believe I am eligible for GA and GA was wrong to deny me”
-and-
“I believe I am entitled to assistance for (Insert the assistance you applied for)”
-and-
Include your address and phone number.
After I submit the appeal, then what?

The town must schedule you for a fair hearing within 5 days. This is informal and normally happens at the town office but should only occur over the phone during the COVID-19 state emergency.

Can I have someone with me to my fair hearing?

You can bring anyone you like, including an interpreter of your choice or your representative. Pine Tree Legal can help with GA cases if you are a citizen or have a citizen child. Maine Equal Justice may be able to help those who do not yet have permanent status.

For more information, contact:

- State of Maine, through the DHHS Hotline: 1-800-442-6003
- Pine Tree Legal Assistance: https://ptla.org/contact-us
- Maine Equal Justice: https://maineequaljustice.org/people/legal-assistance-contact/