



Attention ERA recipients:

Do you need help paying to stay housed in a hotel?

General Assistance (GA) may be able to help

What is GA?

It's a state program that is run by Maine's towns. It helps people without other resources to pay for necessities like housing costs, electricity, heat, food, and medicine.

Where do I apply for GA?

Towns handle applications. Larger towns have specialized GA or Social Services offices to take applications. Smaller towns often have the town clerk take applications.

- ***What if I'm homeless or living in temporary housing?*** You can apply in the town where you're currently located! Towns can't make you apply in the town where you last lived. Please contact Maine Equal Justice if your town's GA administrator won't take your application.

Can I get GA if I'm already getting Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA)?

Yes. The State's GA Coordinator has advised all towns that people can get GA in addition to ERA if they're eligible for GA. So, if you're financially eligible for GA, you can get GA to pay hotel costs in addition to ERA's daily rate.

- ***What if the town says I can't get ERA and GA at the same time?*** You can call the State GA Hotline at 1-800-442-6003 to make a complaint or contact Maine Equal Justice.

What do I need to apply for GA?

- You need to show you don't have the financial resources to pay for your basic necessities, like your housing costs.
- If you've applied for GA in the past, they may ask you to prove that you've

126 Sewall Street Augusta, Maine 04330-6822
Phone: (207) 626-7058 Fax: (207) 621-8148 www.maineequaljustice.org

spent all your income in the last month on “basic needs.”¹

What if the town office accepting GA applications is closed?

You have the right to apply for emergency GA 24/7. Every town must provide information on how to do that on their website and/or at their town office. A lot of towns tell people to call the local police department (non-emergency number) to apply for GA outside of business hours.

- *If you have trouble accessing your GA office or applying, you can call the State GA Hotline at 1-800-442-6003.*

I tried applying, but they didn't let me complete an application. What do I do?

Everyone has the right to apply for GA. Even if you're not eligible, they must let you apply and give you a written denial letter.

- *So when the town says “**You're probably not eligible...**”*
- *You have the right to say “**I'd like to apply anyway,**” and **ask for a written decision.***

If you follow these steps and you still can't apply, or if you didn't receive a written decision, contact the State GA Hotline at 1-800-442-6003 to make a complaint. You can also contact 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 request a fair hearing. You have to make a written request. Email is fine if you have the GA administrator's email. If not, bring a signed and dated letter to the GA office with something like...

- *“I am requesting a fair hearing.”*
- *“I believe I'm eligible for GA and GA was wrong to deny me.”*
- *“I believe I'm eligible for GA to pay for my housing costs that I can't afford.”*
- *Make sure to include your address and phone number so they can contact you about the hearing time and date!*

After you've followed these steps, the town has to schedule a hearing in 5 working days. This is informal and normally happens at the town office or by phone.

¹ Basic needs include food, potable water, clothing, shelter, fuel, electricity, medically necessary services recommended by a physician, medications, and phone bills if you need your phone for medical reasons like communicating with your providers regularly. Your town may have a longer list of basic needs—ask the GA administrator what counts as basic needs in your town!

Can I have someone with me at my fair hearing?

You can bring anyone you like, including an interpreter or your representative. If you're an ERA recipient in a hotel, please contact Maine Equal Justice or Pine Tree Legal Assistance to see if you can get representation in your case.

What if the town approves me for GA, but it's not enough money to cover my hotel costs?

If you're in this situation, please contact Maine Equal Justice for advice.

In most cases, you can only apply for GA every 30 days. Towns also have "GA maximums" that they follow. So in most cases, people can only get help up to the GA maximum every 30 days.

But, if you're homeless or facing homelessness, GA considers this an "emergency." You can apply for GA as you need it to stop the emergency. Even if you got GA within the last 30 days, you should be able to reapply to prevent an emergency like being forced out of a hotel. Again, if you're in this situation, please contact Maine Equal Justice for more advice.

For more information contact:

- State GA Hotline: 1-800-442-6003
- Maine Equal Justice:
<https://maineequaljustice.org/people/legal-assistance-contact/>
- Pine Tree Legal Assistance: <https://ptla.org/contact-us>