

General Assistance

General Assistance, or GA, is a state-wide emergency assistance program of last resort. GA provides immediate aid to people who are unable to provide for their own basic needs. GA is not intended to be a long term sustainability program. Non-citizens have a two-year lifetime cap on receiving GA.

State law requires all municipalities to administer General Assistance and then each municipality is reimbursed by the State. The legislature sets the dollar amounts to be allotted for rent, utilities, food and non-food, all based on family size. You can find in your packet the GA rental maximums adopted by Portland, South Portland and Westbrook. You will note that the maximum amounts are different for each town. Not all municipalities have adopted these amounts.

The following language is from the GA orientation all of our guest receive who access General Assistance.

Eligibility:

You must exhaust all your money and benefits such as food stamps, TANF, SSI, Social Security, etc. before you can receive General Assistance. You will meet with an eligibility worker every 30 days to be re-evaluated. If you are eligible, you will be given a voucher. You are not given cash. Vouchers can be used at designated grocery stores and pharmacies. Your landlord will receive their payment via check and you'll receive a receipt showing the payment.

What GA covers:

- Rent: Utilities and heating such as electric, heat, water, sewer, fuel/gas, and oil
- Prescription drugs
- Food
- Non-food such as soap, cleaning products, etc.

*For a list of what GA considers food and non-food, please see the included list

Priorities:

If you do receive income while receiving GA, you must spend it on your basic necessities in this order: 1) Rent 2) Utilities 3) Medical Care 4) Food/Nonfood 5) Other priority needs

Saving Receipts:

While receiving GA, you must save all your receipts for all the voucher money spent. If you do not, you will be sanctioned and will lose your benefits for 90 days.

Workfare:

You are required to participate in workfare as a condition of receiving General Assistance. You will repay the City by volunteering at a non-profit program the exact number of hours you would need to work to gain that dollar amount x the minimum wage. English language learners can use their in-class and study hours as countable workfare hours.



Ineligible Food Items

Please do not combine Food and Non-Food Vouchers

Vouchers are ONLY to be used in Portland and at the Vendor specified on the voucher

Beer

Bottled Water

Candy

Grocery: Non-descriptive - any items purchased that have no description are ineligible (Meat, Dairy, Produce and Seafood are OK)

Hot or Cold Prepared foods - Any food specified with Meals Tax from the Vendor, an 8% Tax on Prepared foods

Liquor

Pet Food

Soda

Special Deposits (Any specialty item that allow a customer to redeem for money e.g. returnable milk container for \$1.50)

Vitamins (Must be specified)

Wine

Ineligible Non-Food Items

Certain non-food items must be specified to be purchased with a City Voucher

This list is subject to change pending review by The City of Portland General Assistance Administrator

Acne Cream

Air Freshener

Bleaching lotions

Candles

Cigarettes (Any and all tobacco products)

Clothing and accessories

Cold Medicine (Must be specified)

Dishes

Electrical Appliances

Flowers

Greeting Cards

Hair and Styling Sprays

Hair Dyes

Laxatives (Must be specified)

Lice Medication (Must be specified)

Make-Up/ Cosmetics

Nail Polish

Over-The-Counter Medication (Must be specified)

Perfume/ Cologne/Aftershave

Pet products/Supplies

Stationary

Sun glasses (Sunscreen is OK)

Toys

Watches/ Jewelry

Waxes / Polishes

Administrator Signature

Date

Dave MacLean

(207) 482-5124

Printed Name

Phone

Voucher Options

Food and Non-Food Vouchers can be issued to the following store(s) of your choice:

Jamezy (Formerly African International Grocery Store) 799C Forest Avenue	Moriah Store 364 Cumberland Ave.
African Supermarket 44 Washington Ave.	Peace Food Market 21 Chestnut St. Suite 102
Foodie Friends 630 Forest Ave. HALAL	Save-A-Lot 268 St. John St.
Hannaford (Portland-2 choices) 295 Forest Ave. 787 Riverside St.	Mimios Boutique 981 Forest Ave
Jazeera Market 652 Congress St. HALAL	Sindibad Market 710 Forest Ave. Suite 3 HALAL
Madina Market 845 Forest Ave.	Makkah Halal Market 34 Vannah Ave. HALAL
Safari Grocery 30 Washington Avenue HALAL	Baghdad 1190 Forest Avenue HALAL
Helena Store 675 Forest Ave	

**You may not add money to vouchers.

You also have the option of having your vouchers "split" between stores.
Example: You are eligible for \$20 in food vouchers. You would like \$15 for Store "A" and the remaining \$5 for Store "B."

All vouchers must be used in the City of Portland.
PLEASE TELL YOUR CASEWORKER YOUR PREFERENCE.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a program for low income families with children. It provides cash benefits each month, and may also help you pay high housing costs. TANF is funded by the federal government, but each state sets up a program with rules specific to that state.

Who is eligible for TANF?

The TANF rules changed in 2017. Before the rule change, a child had to be 'deprived' of the support of a parent to qualify for benefits. This isn't true anymore. Many more two-parent families are now eligible for TANF.

Most adults who receive TANF must participate in ASPIRE - a work training and education program run by Fedcap.

Housing and Housing Inspections

Questions to ask before looking at an apartment

1. Does the landlord take General Assistance? 95% of landlords in greater Portland do not currently take General Assistance.
2. Does the rent fall within the General Assistance maximum rental guidelines adopted by that city or town? See the rental guidelines for towns in Greater Portland in your packet.
3. Is the apartment walkable to services?
4. Is it located near a bus line? (even though GA doesn't provide bus tickets)

Inspection Process

The City of Portland has new inspection rules in place. Every apartment unit in Portland must be inspected by City Housing, with the landlords who receive general assistance rental vouchers being the highest priority. All buildings that have more than 4 apartment units will also need to be inspected by the Fire Department, which follows a different set of codes. The apartments are to be inspected yearly or bi-yearly.

In Portland there are 4600 unique properties, with 3000 owners. The City employs 4 housing inspectors.

Reasons why apartments fail the inspection:

- Sometimes it's simple things, such as replacement of fire alarm batteries.
- Sometimes apartments will fail because of lack of egresses and the size of windows.
- Antique apartments in Portland will often not pass inspection.

Many landlords don't accept General Assistance vouchers for this reason. They know their building may not pass inspection and they can avoid the inspection by accepting cash-paying tenants.

General Assistance Expense Guidelines

PORTLAND

# Bedroom	Unheated-Monthly	Heated-Monthly	Everything included: heat, hot water, electric
1	\$963	\$1,087	\$1,154
2	\$1,244	\$1,398	\$1,473
3	\$1,700	\$1,887	\$1,9273
4	\$1,964	\$2,191	\$2,290

WESTBROOK

# Bedroom	Unheated-Monthly	Heated-Monthly	Everything included: heat, hot water, electric
2	\$983	\$1,107	\$1,254
3	\$1,355	\$1,543	\$1,629
4	\$1,377	\$1,606	\$1,705

SOUTH PORTLAND

# Bedroom	#People	Unheated-Monthly	Heated-Monthly	Heated + Electricity-Monthly
<i>0 Efficiency</i>	1	\$844.00	\$942.00	\$1,002.00
1	2	\$943.00	\$1,064.00	\$1,131.50
2	3	\$1,227.00	\$1,354.00	\$1,429.00
3	4	\$1,658.00	\$1,841.00	\$1,927.00
4	5	\$1,771.00	\$1,994.00	\$2,093.00
5	6	\$2,002.75	\$2,257.00	\$2,364.00
6	7	\$2,234.50	\$2,520.00	\$2,634.50