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GENERAL RELIEF GUIDANCE (GR) MANUAL

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1. LEGAL BASE/PURPOSE

The Code of Virginia, Section **63.2-802**, provides the legal basis for **the General Relief (GR) Program**. All regulations, procedures, and instructions are promulgated by the State Board of Social Services under authority of the Code of Virginia.

The General Relief Program is an optional program designed to provide assistance **for unattached children, i.e., children not residing with relatives**. Localities operating a General Relief (GR) Program shall operate the Program under procedures established by the State Board and set forth in the following chapters. The GR Program is financed through State (62.5%) and local (37.5%) funding.

a) Transfers

Because of the nature of the General Relief Program, a General Relief case cannot be transferred from one locality to another. When a recipient leaves the locality, his/her case is to be terminated at the earliest date administratively possible.

b) General Relief Plan

The General Relief Plan is completed by a **locality** which states how the GR **unattached child** program will be operated. The document must be approved by the **Economic Assistance and Employment (EAE) Unit**, Division of Benefit Programs, **Virginia** Department of Social Services (**VDSS**). Appeals and monitoring will be conducted in accordance with the locality's approved Plan.

An agency may propose to amend or discontinue its GR Program by **electronically** submitting **the revised GR Plan** from the Director or a **designated agency representative** to the **EAE** Unit Manager. The GR Plan and instructions for use can be found at:
<http://spark.dss.virginia.gov/divisions/bp/gr/>.

The submitted **plan** will be reviewed by the **EAE** Unit. **Plans** that cannot be approved because of incomplete information **or other discrepancies** will be returned to the agency for follow-up.

An agency may implement an **unattached child** GR Plan amendment only after the amended **plan has** been approved. The effective date of the amendment will be the first of the month after **the approval of the Plan, if not otherwise specified**.

State approval of a GR Plan or any subsequent amendments in no way indicates the availability of additional funding. The Plan is intended, rather, as an indication of how already budgeted funds will be disbursed.

c) Funding

The funding sources for the GR Program are State funds authorized by the General Assembly of Virginia and local funds authorized by the governing bodies. **VDSS** reimburses 62.5% of the expenditures **to agencies** for **reimbursement of the unattached child** component.

2. ASSISTANCE FOR UNATTACHED CHILDREN

a) Eligibility

Needy children under 18, who would be eligible for **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** except for the relationship requirement, may qualify for this component. NOTE: "Except for the relationship requirement" means that the relationship of the caretaker to the child does not meet the **relationship** requirements in Section 201.5A of the **TANF** Manual. Example: When evidence of paternity does not exist, a putative father or his relatives are not relatives of the child; therefore, a child living with one of these individuals who would be otherwise eligible for **TANF** is eligible for GR as an unattached child.

b) Assistance Provided

- 1) An agency must specify in its General Relief Plan if all unattached children living in the home will be assisted.
- 2) If all unattached children are not assisted, the agency must identify the situations in which the unattached children **living in the home** are assisted. **For example: If an agency opts to provide unattached child assistance only for children that the caretaker has obtained custody for, it must be outlined in their GR Plan.**

3. TIME STANDARDS

a) Action on Application

Action is to be taken on every **Application for Benefits (032-03-0824)** for GR.

Unless the agency is unable to take action through no fault of its own, the time standard for taking action to **approve** or deny a GR application is **30** days following the date of application. This requirement is met if payment, notice of denial, or notice of extension of pending status is mailed within the **30** days following the date of the Application for Benefits. **When the 30th day following the application date falls on a weekend or holiday, the worker must provide a decision on the application by the last working day prior to the 30th day.**

1) **Exceptions to the 30 day processing standard may apply when:**

- a. **the applicant has limitations that hinder him from securing verifications. In this instance the local agency must assist the applicant in securing verifications. The beginning date of assistance (BDOA) will be the first of the month following the month of application.**
- b. **an emergency beyond the agency's control occurs and the application was otherwise eligible. The BDOA must be the date of application.**

2) **At no time should the application remain pending beyond 60 days.**

If action is not taken within the 30 day processing standard, the EW must document the case to explain the cause for delay and the applicant must be notified via the notice of action of the status of his application, the reason for delay, and his right to appeal.

b. Redeterminations

All ongoing cases must be reviewed **every 12 months** to determine whether eligibility still exists.

c. Partial Reviews

A review of the eligibility requirement(s) must be done when a change that may affect eligibility occurs or is expected to occur.

d. Changes

1) Applicant's/Recipient's Responsibility

The applicant/recipient is responsible for reporting any changes in his/her situation **within 10 calendar days from the date the change becomes known to the individual. The change may be reported by telephone, in person, mail or electronically.**

In the event that the applicant/recipient has more than one person in the agency working with him (e.g., a separate **SNAP** worker or service worker), the applicant/recipient will have met his obligation to report, if he/she reports the change to any one of his/her workers in the agency.

2) Agency Responsibility

If an increase **in benefits** is **determined**, the increase must be effective no later than the first of the month following the month in which the change is reported. This means a one-month-only or supplemental payment must be made if the change is reported too late **to change the benefit amount. The Notice of Action (032-03-0017)** will be used. EXAMPLE: When a change is reported on July 10, the increase must be effective August 1.

If the **proposed** action is a decrease in amount of payment or termination of assistance, the Advance Notice of Proposed Action (**032-03-0018**) must be mailed. The reduced payment or nonpayment of assistance must be effective no later than the second month following the month in which the change is reported. EXAMPLE: When a change is reported on July 26, the decrease will be effective September 1.

4. INTERVIEW

An interview by the eligibility worker with the caretaker of an unattached child, or an authorized representative is required. The interview may be waived at the agency's discretion **depending on individual circumstances that include, but are not limited to, disability, illness, care of a household member, or prolonged severe weather. The interview may be conducted in the local department, by telephone, a home visit, or an interview with an authorized representative.** If an authorized representative is acting on behalf of the applicant/recipient, the authorization must be in writing.

a) Single Interview

A single interview for applicants and recipients of GR and **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** is required if:

- 1) the applicant who applies for GR **unattached child** wishes to apply for **SNAP benefits** for the household; or
- 2) all members of the GR **unattached child** case are a separate household for **SNAP** purposes and the application/ redetermination form is completed during the month before the month the **SNAP benefits** certification expires.

For further instructions on the single interview, see the **SNAP** Certification Manual.

b) Purposes of Interview

During the interview, the eligibility worker (EW):

- 1) makes certain the Application for Benefits (032-03-0824) is complete and that the information provided accurately represents the applicant's/recipient's circumstances;
- 2) determines what information provided needs further substantiation and what, if any, additional information or substantiating evidence is needed to establish eligibility;
- 3) obtains any additional information needed for an eligibility decision; and
- 4) provides information to the applicant/recipient.

c) Information to be Given Applicant/Recipient

- 1) The EW must explain the applicant's/recipient's responsibility to:
 - a) provide accurate and complete information to the best of his/her ability;
 - b) report changes in his/her situation **within 10 calendar days from the date the change became known.**
 - c) his/her liability if he/she fails to report changes **within 10 days.** A copy of the Notification of Change (032-03-0215) may be given to the client with an explanation of its use.
- 2) The agency's responsibility to:
 - a) act on the application within **30** days following the date of the **signed Application of Benefits (032-03-0824)** and
 - b) make changes as appropriate.
- 3) The EW must explain the applicant's/recipient's right to appeal:
 - a) if action is not taken on an application within the required time period; or
 - b) if he/she is dissatisfied with the agency's action.

5. NONFINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY

a) Ineligibility For Aid In A Federal Category

Except as specified below, **an unattached child** must be ineligible for assistance in a federal category (SSI or **TANF**). The following individuals are not eligible for GR **unattached child** since they do not meet the requirement of ineligibility in a federal category:

- 1) a caretaker who has refused to apply for assistance for a child when eligibility appears to exist;
- 2) a caretaker who does not apply for assistance for a child who appears to be eligible, was eligible, has been denied or closed for refusal to cooperate in determining initial or continuing eligibility;
- 3) a caretaker who has refused assistance for a child when eligibility has been determined to exist.

b) Declaration of Citizenship or Alien Status

As a condition of eligibility, all General Relief applicants/recipients shall provide, or have provided on their behalf, a signed statement attesting, under penalty of perjury, to their citizenship or alien status. An applicant/recipient age 18 or older must sign the declaration for all assistance unit members. In the absence of an adult in the assistance unit, the applicant will sign for all unit members.

The declaration is to be obtained at the time of application or when a new member is requested/required to be in the unit. Exception: A written declaration on behalf of a newborn should be obtained at the time the child is requested/required to be included in the assistance unit. The written declaration must be provided by the next eligibility determination if not obtained at the time the child is added to the assistance unit. Verification of the newborn's citizenship or alien status cannot be postponed until the next eligibility determination.

The declaration requirement is met when the applicant/recipient completes and signs the "Application for Benefits".

Any member for whom the citizenship or alien status declaration requirement has not been met:

- 1) shall not be eligible;
- 2) if required to be in the assistance unit, the income and resources of the person will be considered available to the assistance unit.

c) **Citizenship and Alienage**

State law requires anyone whose needs are considered in determining the amount of assistance for GR unattached child to be a citizen of the United States or an eligible alien.

1) **Citizenship Status - An individual is a U.S. citizen if he is:**

- a) **born in the United States, regardless of the citizenship of his parents; or**
- b) **born outside the United States of U.S. citizen parents (the mother if born out of wedlock); or**
- c) **born outside the United States of alien parents and has been naturalized as a U.S. citizen. A child born outside the United States of alien parents automatically becomes a citizen after birth if his parents (the mother if born out of wedlock) are naturalized before he becomes 16 years of age.**

2) **Alienage - An alien must be a qualified alien as defined below or meet the exception in b.3) below. If the alien does not meet the definition of a qualified alien or the exception, he does not meet the alienage requirement. An applicant age 19 or older who declares himself a citizen must provide proof of citizenship or a valid social security number.**

- a) **"Qualified alien" is defined as:**
 - 1) **an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA);**
 - 2) **an alien granted asylum under Section 208 of the INA;**
 - 3) **a refugee admitted to the U.S. under Section 207 of the INA, or an alien who is admitted to the U.S. as an Amerasian immigrant pursuant to section 584 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act of 1988 (as contained in section 101(e) of Public Law 100-202 and amended by the 9th provision under MIGRATION AND REFUGEE ASSISTANCE in title II of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1989, Public Law 100-461, as amended), or an alien who is a victim of human trafficking.**

- 4) an alien paroled into the U.S. under Section 212(d)(5) of the INA for a period of at least one year;
 - 5) an alien whose deportation is being withheld under Section 243(h) of the INA (as in effect prior to April 1, 1997) or section 241(b)(3) of the INA (as amended by section 305(a) of division C of Public Law 104-208);
 - 6) an alien granted conditional entry pursuant to Section 203(a)(7) of the INA as in effect prior to April 1, 1980;
 - 7) an alien, and/or alien parent of battered children and/or an alien child of a battered parent who is battered or subjected to extreme cruelty while in the U.S., or
 - 8) an alien who is a Cuban or Haitian entrant as defined in section 501(e) of the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980.
- b) Exception for Veterans and Persons on Active Duty and Their Relatives - An alien lawfully residing in the state (not here illegally) meets the alienage requirement, provided he is:
- 1) a qualified alien and is a veteran discharged honorably and not on account of alienage and who has served a minimum of 24 months or the period for which the person was called to active duty. "Veteran" also includes persons who served in the Philippine Commonwealth Army during World War II or as Philippine Scouts following the war;

- 2) a qualified alien and is on active duty (other than active duty for training) in the Armed Forces of the United States; or
- 3) the spouse or unmarried dependent child of an individual (not deceased) described in 1) or 2) above, or the surviving spouse of an individual (deceased) described in 1) or 2) above, provided the surviving spouse has not remarried and was married to the deceased veteran:
 - a) before the end of a 15-year period following the end of the period of military service in which the injury or disease causing the death of the veteran was incurred or aggravated; or
 - b) for one year or more; or
 - c) any period of time if a child was born of the marriage or was born to them before the marriage.

The spouse or unmarried dependent child is not required to be a qualified alien.

- 3) Verification of immigration status is required at application, redetermination, and as individuals are added, using U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) documents provided by the alien or, if the individual is a victim of human trafficking, using documentation from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement. If an applicant/recipient's alien status changes or an individual who was an alien becomes a U.S. citizen, his eligibility for assistance must be evaluated under the new status unless otherwise stated in policy or procedures.

If an alien presents expired documents as evidence of his immigration status, refer the alien to the local USCIS office to obtain documentation of status. In unusual cases involving aliens who have physical or mental disabilities that limit their ability to obtain or provide the required evidence, the worker should make every effort to assist the individual to obtain the required evidence. If the alien can provide an alien registration number, the worker should file a Form G-845 and Supplement, along with the alien registration number and a copy of any expired USCIS document presented with the local USCIS office to verify status.

The alienage/citizenship requirements in the TANF manual are applicable to an unattached child.

If an individual has no means of documenting that he is an eligible alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence or an alien permanently residing in the United States, verification may be obtained from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), part of the Department of Homeland Security.

The USCIS National Customer Service Call Center is 1-800-375-5283, or for the hearing impaired, 1-800-767-1833. The web address for USCIS is <http://uscis.gov>

When verification of immigration status is needed, the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlement (SAVE) Program is available. Refer to the TANF manual, Chapter 201.7E, for instructions.

c. Sponsorship of Aliens

Aliens may be sponsored by either an individual or an agency/organization. Sponsorship satisfies a requirement of the USCIS that an individual petitioning to come to the U.S. is not likely to become a "public charge."

- 1) Agency/Organization Sponsor - If sponsored by an agency/organization, eligibility for GR does not exist for the first three years of U.S. residence unless the agency/organization no longer exists or is financially unable to provide support.

Certain Soviet Jewish refugees have been admitted to the United States under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the U.S. Department of State and two private Jewish agencies, the Council of Jewish Aid and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. The MOU states that the sponsoring agency will ensure that these refugees do not require cash, medical or food stamp assistance for two years after their admission to the U.S. Refugees admitted under MOU will possess USCIS Arrival-Departure Records (I-94) which contain the following statement:

This refugee is sponsored by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and (name of local Jewish organization). Private resources are available. If assistance is sought, please call (name of local Jewish agency) at (phone number)."

The sponsorship statement is to be regarded by the worker as a lead that other income and resources may be available to meet the refugee's needs. The sponsoring agency must be contacted to determine the actual availability of any income and/or resources and use such verified information in the determination of the unit's eligibility. It is not; however, appropriate to deny an application for assistance solely on the basis of the sponsorship statement on the refugee's I-94.

- 2) Individual Sponsor - Individuals who petition USCIS to become a sponsor of an alien must execute an affidavit of support. In some situations, an alien may be sponsored by more than one individual. Refer to the TANF manual, Section [305.4](#) regarding sponsored alien requirements.

d) Residency

Residence must be verified except in unusual cases, such as homeless assistance units, or assistance units newly arrived in a locality, where verification of residence cannot reasonably be accomplished.

An applicant/recipient must be residing in the locality where he/she is requesting or receiving assistance.

Documentation of residency such as current school records showing name and address, landlord's statement, etc. is acceptable.

e) Pursuit of Support

Localities that opt to have a GR Unattached Child Program must consider the pursuit of support for that child from the parent or parents.

The parents of the unattached children should be pursued by the agency whether the whereabouts are known or unknown. The applicant should assist the agency in obtaining support payments for the child for whom assistance is requested. At the time of redetermination, the caretaker or nonrelative must make known any knowledge of the whereabouts of the parent (s). Outside of the redetermination, knowledge of parent (s) whereabouts or other changes should be reported to the agency within 10 days.

The caretaker or nonrelative should apply for Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) services to establish support payments from the parent/parents. The EW should assist the caretaker by completing the DCSE application which is available at:

http://spark.dss.virginia.gov/divisions/dcse/files/forms/warehouse/establishment/CSE_Services_Application_10_20_17.pdf. After application completion, forward to DCSE and they will initiate action to establish support.

6. INCOME

a) Disregarded Income

Except as specified, the following types of income will be considered exempt and will be disregarded in determining financial eligibility and calculating the grant:

- 1) Home produce of the assistance unit utilized for their own consumption.
- 2) The value of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.
- 3) The value of foods donated under the U.S.D.A. Commodity Distribution Program, including those furnished through school meal programs.
- 4) Any payment received under Title II of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970.
- 5) Any benefits received under Title VII, Nutrition Program for the Elderly, of the Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended.
- 6) Money received for educational purposes including income received from college work study programs.
- 7) Training allowances (transportation, books, required training expenses and motivational allowances) provided by Vocational Rehabilitation

The disregard is not applicable to the allowance provided by VR to the family of the participating individual.

- 8) Any portion of an SSI/payment and/or Auxiliary Grant.
- 9) Payments to VISTA Volunteers under Title I, when the monetary value of such payments is less than minimum wage as determined by the Director of the action office, and payments for services of reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses made to individual volunteers serving as foster grandparents, senior health aides, or senior companions, and to persons serving in the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) and Active Corps of Executives (ACE) and other programs pursuant to Titles II and III, of Public Law 93-113, the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973, including AmeriCorps VISTA. The worker must contact the Action Office at the following address or telephone number when VISTA payments are reported; Action Office, 400 N. 8th Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219, (804) 771-2197.

Exception: This disregard does not apply to payments to participants in AmeriCorps USA and AmeriCorps NCCC. These programs are under the authority of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 which contains no requirement to disregard payments to participants applying for or receiving TANF.

- 10) The Veterans Administration educational benefit for the caretaker 18 or older is disregarded in its entirety when it is the veteran's only source of assistance for education. No verification beyond the award letter or benefit payment check is needed. If the veteran receives additional assistance in the form of a grant, loan, or scholarship, the VA educational benefit is to be disregarded in its entirety as long as any portion of the benefit is used to pay for tuition, books, fees, equipment required by the education/training program, transportation if the education/training institution is more than one mile from the veteran's residence, and/or child care services necessary for school attendance.

Exception: Any funds included in the benefit amount specifically for dependents are to be counted as income to the assistance unit.

Any separate housing allowance, including an allowance authorized under the Post 9/11 GI Bill, is to be counted as income to the assistance unit.

- 11) All payments for supportive services under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA).

Additionally, all payments issued to a student under age 18 or, if age 18, scheduled to graduate no later than the month he/she turns 19 under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), including Job Corps payments. (Note: Wages paid to an adult WIA participant are counted as earned income).
- 12) Income tax refunds (including Earned Income Tax Credit payments and refunds). These exempt tax credits include federal earned income tax credits and state earned income tax credits.
- 13) Any payment made under the Fuel Assistance Program.
- 14) The value of supplemental food assistance received under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966. This includes all school meal programs; the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program; and the child care food program. Money paid to day care providers under the National School Lunch Act to serve meals to children, other than their own, is countable.
- 15) All federal, state, or local government rent and housing subsidies and utility payments.
- 16) Any funds distributed to, or held in trust for, members of any Indian tribe under Public Law 92-254, 93-134, 94-540, 98-64, 98-123, 98-124 or 97-458. Additionally, interest and investment income accrued on such funds while held in trust, and purchases made with such interest and investment income are disregarded.
- 17) The following of distributions received from a Native Corporation under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (Public Law 100-241):
 - a. Cash (including cash dividends on stock received from a Native Corporation) to the extent that the total received does not exceed \$2,000 per individual per calendar year;
 - b. Stock (including stock issued or distributed by a Native Corporation as a dividend or distribution on stock);
 - c. A partnership interest;

- d. Land or an interest in land (including land or an interest in land received from a Native Corporation as a dividend or distribution on stock); and
 - e. An interest in a settlement trust.
- 18) Income derived from certain submarginal land of the United States which is held in trust for certain Indian tribes (Public Law 94-114).
 - 19) Federal major disaster and emergency assistance provided under the Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Amendments of 1988 and disaster assistance provided by state and local governments and disaster assistance organizations
 - 20) Payments received by individuals of Japanese ancestry under the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, and by Aleuts under the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands Restitution Act (Public Law 100-383).
 - 21) Any payment received from the Agent Orange Settlement Fund or any other fund established in response to the Agent Orange product liability litigation. To verify whether a payment is an Agent Orange payment, use documents in the individual's possession. If the individual cannot provide verification or the situation is unclear, write to the Agent Orange Veteran Payment Program, P.O. Box 110, Hartford, CT 06104, and Attention: Agent Orange Verification. Include in the request the veteran's name and social security number. If a survivor of a qualifying veteran was paid, also provide the survivor's name and social security number.
 - 22) Payment received by individuals under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act.
 - 23) Funds received pursuant to the Maine Indians Claims Settlement Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-420); and the Aroostook Band of Micmac's Settlement Act (Public Law 102-171).
 - 24) Funds paid to an escrow account established under the Family Self Sufficiency Program of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.
 - 25) Student financial assistance received under Bureau of Indian Affairs student assistance programs.
 - 26) Interest earned or appreciation in value on a savings or investment account for the purpose of self-sufficiency.
 - 27) Up to \$2,000 per year of income received by individual Indians, which are derived from leases or other uses of individually-owned trust or restricted lands.

- 28) All bona fide loans, regardless of the intended use. This includes loans obtained for any purpose, and may be from a private individual as well as from a commercial institution. A simple statement signed by both parties indicating that the payment is a loan and must be repaid is sufficient to verify that a loan is bona fide. If the customer indicates that money received was a loan but does not provide required verification, the money is to be treated as unearned income in the month received. Interest earned on the proceeds of a loan while held in a savings account, checking account, or other financial instrument will be counted as unearned income in the month received.
- 29) **The earned income of a child under age 18 or, if age 18, is scheduled to graduate no later than the month he/she turns 19.**
- 30) Payments received by victims of Nazi persecution under Public Law 103-286.
- 31) Matching contributions deposited in an individual development account (IDA) or on the applicant/recipient's behalf in a parallel account maintained by the organization administering the IDA program.
- 32) Interest income of less than an average of \$10 per month.
- 33) Any veteran benefits received by children born with spinal bifida, who are natural children of individuals who served in Vietnam during the period beginning January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975.
- 34) Payments received from the Ricky Ray Hemophilia Relief Fund established under Public Law 105-369.
- 35) Any amount received by or made available to household members for deployment or service in a combat zone will not count as income for GR purposes unless the payment was received before the deployment. This exclusion includes items such as, but not limited to, incentive pay for hazardous duty, special pay for imminent duty or hostile fire duty or certain reenlistment bonuses, or special pay for certain occupational or educational skills.
- 36) A one-time cash payment, identified as a Reception and Placement (R&P) Program payment, made to help a newly arrived refugee meet basic needs during the first 30 days in the country. (Note: An R&P payment is separate from any cash allowances which may be made to a refugee through the Matching Grant (MG) Program.

- b) Countable Income
 - 1) Countable income is income received by or considered available to the assistance unit.
 - 2) **Unearned income is any income that the unattached child receives that is not a payment for work such as Social Security, child support or payments from a trust fund.**
 - 3) **If the countable income of a child in a GR Assistance Unit results in ineligibility for the entire assistance unit and assistance has been requested for two or more children, the child's needs and income shall be excluded from the assistance unit.**

7. VERIFICATION

A caretaker must be advised of the need to substantiate the eligibility factors (e.g., citizenship requirements and income received by the child) to establish eligibility. At the time of application, there should be a joint decision between the client and the EW as to how necessary verification will be secured and who will assume the responsibility for securing each. The EW must provide any assistance unit that needs and wants help, assistance in obtaining any necessary verification.

If the individual has a disability that impairs the individual's ability to gather the information necessary to establish eligibility for benefits, the EW must offer to assist the individual in gathering such information. In addition, if after the EW and applicant initially divide the responsibility for obtaining verification the applicant is, due to a disability, unable to secure information he or she agreed to obtain, the EW must revise the initial division responsibility and assist with obtaining additional information. If, after advising the applicant of the necessary information, the applicant is reluctant or unwilling to provide verifications and refuses to permit the EW to secure them, the EW must consider carefully with him his reasons and explain that without the required verification, eligibility cannot be established.

8. ASSISTANCE UNIT

The term "assistance unit" **for the GR Unattached Child Program** refers to a child or group of children whose income is taken into consideration in determining the need. **All children, for whom assistance is requested for, will make up one assistance unit.**

If a local agency chooses to deviate from guidance when determining the GR Unattached Child assistance unit, the agency must include the details in their GR Plan. The details must outline who will be considered when determining the assistance unit and the basis for doing so.

Unattached children under 18 are eligible if they meet all nonfinancial eligibility requirements and inclusion is requested.

9. RECORD RETENTION

Adequate records documenting all transactions relating to the **unattached** child assistance component, including copies of all forms, must be maintained for three years following the state fiscal year in which the transaction occurred.

10. RECOMMENDATION ON ELIGIBILITY

A recommendation of eligibility or ineligibility must be made by the eligibility worker when the eligibility study is completed on each redetermination or application. This recommendation shall include all information necessary for a decision on eligibility.

11. CASE ACTION

Case Action is the formal agency action by a designated agency representative to determine eligibility on applications, redeterminations, or partial reviews. Case action determines:

- a) eligibility or ineligibility, and, if eligibility exists, the amount and type of assistance and date of entitlement;
- b) person(s) eligible for assistance;
- c) designation of payee - if other than eligible person for a money payment.
- d) change in payee;
- e) change in amount of assistance and
- f) ineligibility for continued assistance.

Each must include the effective date of the action. On an action for an initial payment, the effective date will be the date of entitlement. Payment shall continue in the designated amount and under the designated conditions, until there is another by the local board or superintendent/director.

12. DECISION ON ELIGIBILITY

This decision is the responsibility of the local board however; the superintendent/director is to take action if the local board does not act within the **30 day** time limit or if circumstances require immediate action (Code of Virginia, Sections 63.2-504 and 63.2-514). If the Superintendent/Director takes action, the action is official, but the case must be presented at the next Board meeting for action on continuing eligibility.

If an application is disposed of for one of the following reasons, board action is not required, but the reason for the disposition must be recorded in the case record. These cases are recorded statistically as applications disposed of and are reported to the board.

a) Withdrawal

An applicant may voluntarily withdraw his/her application at any time during the initial determination of eligibility. This may be done by a signed statement indicating the wish to withdraw the application or by verbal request. The Notice of Action -must be sent to confirm the applicant's decision to withdraw.

b) Inability to Locate

If reasonable efforts to locate the applicant are unsuccessful, the agency must include on the Notice of Action, the agency's attempts to locate him/her and request that he/she contact the agency. If the applicant/**caretaker** does not contact the agency so that a decision can be made within the time standard, the application will be denied.

13. NOTIFICATION TO APPLICANT/RECIPIENT

a) Action on Application, Increase in Payment, or Change not Affecting Payment

Notice must be sent to the applicant/recipient whenever:

- 1) action is taken to approve or deny an application or a request for an increase in grant;
- 2) an application is disposed of for reasons other than approval or denial;
- 3) there has been a delay beyond the time standard in acting upon an application or a request for an increase in grant;

The notice shall be sent immediately following the decision or within the **30 day** time standard for processing applications, as appropriate.

b) Decrease in Amount of Assistance **or** Termination

- 1) An Advance Notice of Proposed Action must be sent to the recipient to:
 - a) terminate assistance when the case is determined to be ineligible or the recipient withdraws; or **there is insufficient funding to continue to operate the program.**

- b) decrease the amount of assistance when factors affecting eligibility necessitate a reduction in the grant;
- 2) Except as follows, the notice must be mailed to the recipient at least 10 days before the action taken is effective. Effective means the first of the month in which the check is applicable or in cases of termination, non-issuance of a check. Exception: When a recipient requests termination using a signed and dated statement, the advance notice period does not apply. If the recipient fails to enter the date, the worker must enter the date the statement was received in the agency. The Advance Notice of Proposed Action form must be sent, but the check will not be mailed.
 - 3) If a change requires a reduction or termination in General Relief and a reduction or termination of **SNAP** benefits, the local agency shall issue a single Advance Notice of Proposed Action for the General Relief and **SNAP** action.
 - 4) Except as follows, the assistance payment must be written and mailed unchanged when the regular mailing date for checks occurs within the advance notice period. When assistance is terminated or suspended for the following reasons the check will be held for the same reasons, the reduced amount will be sent, but a check for the difference between the new and old the regular mailing date occurs within the advance notice period. When assistance is terminated for the following reasons, amounts must be written and held. The reasons are:
 - a) The agency has factual information verifying the death of the child or the caretaker.
 - b) The child's whereabouts is unknown and agency mail directed to him/her has been returned by the post office indicating no known forwarding address.

(The recipient's check must, however, be made available to him/her if his/her whereabouts becomes known during the payment period covered by a returned check.)

- c) The locality terminates GR benefits because the recipient has left the city/county where the benefits were being paid.
- d) A change approved by the Division of Benefit Programs in a locality's GR plan adversely affects the client.
- e) The maximum assistance available during a time period has been received and the recipient was notified of the maximum that could be received when the application was approved.

c) Issuance of Payments

a) Money Payments

When all eligibility factors are met, ongoing entitlement begins the first day of the application month. The initial authorization may be for two months to include the first month's payment. The initial payment must be issued when agency action to approve the application is completed.

All checks, including the initial money payment, are to be mailed unless the recipient has a justifiable reason for coming to the office to receive their check. Such reason should be stated by the recipient in writing and the written request should be filed in the case record. There should be one person designated to mail the checks and to deliver all checks for which recipients call.

b) Continuing Payments

The continuing payment for General Relief for initially authorized is a regular monthly assistance payment until changed or cancelled due to a finding of ineligibility for continuing assistance.

c) Terminal Payments

When a recipient of a money payment dies, eligibility for assistance for the month of death exists if the recipient was alive on the first day of the month of death.

d) Assistance for Unattached Children

a) **The appropriate standard of assistance, less all countable income of the assistance unit, as specified in Section 6.b, is the amount of the monthly cash payment for an otherwise eligible assistance unit.**

b) **Local agencies can opt to issue monthly cash payments that are less than the standard of assistance. Changes made to the monthly cash payment must be included in the local agency's General Relief Plan. The details must outline the amount of cash assistance that will be issued for the assistance unit and the basis for doing so.**

c) Reimbursable assistance received in 12 consecutive months cannot exceed the amount specified by each agency in its General Relief Plan.

GROUPING OF LOCALITIES

Group II

Counties

Accomack
Albemarle
Alleghany
Amelia
Amherst
Appomattox
Bath
Bedford
Bland
Botetourt
Brunswick
Buchanan
Buckingham
Campbell
Carroll
Charles City
Charlotte
Chesterfield
Clarke
Craig
Culpeper
Cumberland
Dickenson
Dinwiddie
Essex
Floyd
Fluvanna
Franklin
Frederick
Giles
Gloucester
Goochland
Grayson
Greene
Greensville
Halifax
Hanover
Henrico
Highland
Isle of Wright
King and Queen
King William
Lancaster

Lee
Loudoun
Louisa
Lunenburg
Madison
Mathews
Mecklenburg
Middlesex
Nelson
New Kent
Northampton
Northumberland
Nottoway
Orange
Page
Patrick
Pittsylvania
Powhatan
Prince Edward
Prince George
Pulaski
Rappahannock
Richmond County
Roanoke
Rockingham
Rockbridge
Russell
Scott
Shenandoah
Smyth
Southampton
Surry
Sussex
Tazewell
Warren
Washington
Westmoreland
Wise
Wythe

Cities

Bristol
Buena Vista
Chesapeake
Clifton Forge
Covington
Danville
Emporia
Franklin
Galax
Harrisonburg
Hopewell
Lexington
Lynchburg
Martinsville
Norfolk
Norton
Petersburg
Portsmouth
Radford
Richmond
Roanoke
Suffolk
Virginia Beach
Williamsburg
Winchester

Group III

Counties

Arlington
Augusta
Caroline
Fairfax
Fauquier
James City
King George
Montgomery
Prince William
Spotsylvania
Stafford
York

Cities

Alexandria
Charlottesville
Colonial Heights
Fredericksburg
Hampton
Manassas
Manassas Park
Newport News
Poquoson
Staunton
Waynesboro

ASSISTANCE STANDARDS

<u>Size of Assistance Unit</u>	<u>Group II</u>	<u>Group III</u>
1	\$187	\$260
2	\$274	\$347
3	\$344	\$419
4	\$411	\$486
5	\$486	\$578
6	\$543	\$632
7	\$607	\$699
8	\$678	\$770
9	\$738	\$830
10	\$804	\$895
Each person above 10	\$67	\$67
MAXIMUM REIMBURSABLE PAYMENT	\$516	\$614