



Yuba County To Provide Aid To Neediest Residents

Board of Supervisors adopts regulations to comply with state mandate.

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MARYSVILLE, CA- The Board of Supervisors adopted new, lawful General Assistance (GA) regulations on December 15, 2015. The County had been operating its program by old Board resolutions that were out of date, illegal in a number of respects, and not applied uniformly. This historic event moved the County toward compliance with its legal obligation to provide the County's neediest residents with the last resort assistance to which they are entitled. Very few extremely low income county residents, despite very high poverty and unemployment rates, had been receiving aid.

GA is a program mandated by state law. It requires counties to provide about \$330 dollars per month to severely impoverished lawful residents who have nowhere else to turn. Recipients often are homeless, most are unemployed and unemployable. Many recipients have disabilities or are veterans or both. A significant number are survivors of domestic violence, fleeing their abusers. GA allows these individuals to find modest shelter, such as a shared room, and to begin to become self-sufficient.

Before adoption of the new regulations, Yuba County imposed eligibility hurdles that were so extensive that very few people could navigate the application process. California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) assisted one client reapply for benefits after she was denied, only to be rejected a second time. "I've been to law school and am pretty good at filling out forms, but I couldn't even fill out the GA application forms to the exacting standards used by the County," said CRLA Directing Attorney Laura Clauson Ferree.

"My client was desperate and facing homelessness; even this small amount, only \$11 dollars a day, can be critical," said Ms. Ferree. Multiple clients asked CRLA for help after being rejected for benefits. The County asked them for duplicative and unnecessary verifications, and despite being clearly eligible, their applications had been denied.

"Sadly, Yuba County is not an outlier in its operation of its GA program" said Lauren Hansen, a staff attorney at the Public Interest Law Project (PILP). "Our ongoing Rural General Assistance Project, (Rural GAP) is dedicated to improving access to GA benefits in rural counties that have small or nonexistent GA programs, probably due to simple unawareness of the law."

"We're very pleased that the County has listened to us and worked to ensure the County complies with state law by providing a small safety net for its most vulnerable residents," said Ms. Ferree. Ms. Hansen agreed, "the new regulations are a huge improvement."

About California Rural Legal Assistance:

Founded in 1966, CRLA's mission is to fight for justice and individual rights alongside the most exploited communities of our society. CRLA provides legal services to over 43,000 low-income people annually. Visit www.crla.org for more information.

About The Public Interest Law Project:

The Public Interest Law Project is a non-profit public interest law firm focusing on advocacy on behalf of low-income Californians and providing support to legal services programs like CRLA. Visit www.pilpca.org for more information.