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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors to Implement State Mandate to Provide Last-Resort Aid to County's Neediest Residents

San Luis Obispo, CA – On November 6, 2018, for the first time in more than 25 years, the Board of Supervisors adopted regulations for its General Assistance program. 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. The County's old regulations were out of date and inconsistent with state law in many respects.

General Assistance (GA) is a program of last resort mandated by state law and administered by counties. It requires counties to provide approximately \$355 dollars per month to county residents who have no other source of income, and no means of supporting themselves. GA recipients are often homeless, unemployed, or unable to work because of disabilities. GA allows these individuals to pay for modest shelter, like a shared room, and to acquire other essentials such as food, hygiene products, and transportation.

Significant changes to San Luis Obispo County's GA program include:

- Ending an unlawful ban on providing benefits to county residents with past drug felony convictions.
- Revamping the application process to make it easier for county residents outside of the City of San Luis Obispo to obtain benefits. For example, courtesy applications will be received in all regional offices.

- Expediting the provision of full benefits to applicants with disabilities, rather than withholding a percentage of the applicant’s benefits until they provide written verification of their disability.
- Providing applicants with disabilities reasonable time limits to attend doctor’s appointments and verify disabilities.
- Aligning job search requirements with the CalFresh Employment and Training program requirements.
- Allowing applicants to have one vehicle without having it count as an asset or affect eligibility.
- Providing full benefits to homeless applicants and recipients instead of unlawfully reducing benefits on the basis of homelessness.

“These policy changes will have a tremendous benefit for our clients, who are San Luis Obispo County residents with severe disabilities,” said Abby Lassen of 5Cities Homeless Coalition. “People with disabilities who have no other source of income often wait years for the Social Security Administration to approve their Social Security disability or SSI benefits. By making GA benefits more accessible for people with disabilities, the County’s changes will help our clients meet their most basic needs while they wait for a decision from Social Security.”

“These changes can translate to new clothes, money for transportation to look for jobs, or a place to stay overnight for people in dire need during the cold winter months. We applaud the County for updating its program.” stated Frank Kopinski, Directing Attorney, CRLA San Luis Obispo.

“We appreciate that the County worked with advocates collaboratively to make these critical changes to the General Assistance program.” said Lauren Hansen , PILP.

Public Interest Law Project

The Public Interest Law Project (<http://www.pilpca.org>) 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.

California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA)

Founded in 1966, CRLA’s mission is to fight for justice and individual rights alongside the most exploited communities of our society. Through a network of regional offices and cross-cutting programs, CRLA provides legal services to over 50,000 low-income people annually. Our work impacts farmworkers, individuals with disabilities, immigrant populations, LGBT communities, women, children and families in rural areas. For more information on CRLA, please visit: www.crla.org.