

# Work First New Jersey (WFNJ) Emergency Assistance (EA) Training

State of New Jersey



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DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

# WFNJ EA

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## Purpose of the Training:

- Highlight WFNJ eligibility regarding administration of the EA program
- Develop a process to serve mutual clients/consumers
- Cross Training

# What is EA?

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Emergency Assistance (EA) is a supportive service to meet the emergent needs of WFNJ and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients so they can comply with the work requirement, by preventing disruptions caused by homelessness and related emergencies.



# How EA Helps

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Temporary housing and shelter-related assistance for people who are eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), General Assistance (GA) or SSI.

*It helps to prevent homelessness by:*

- Paying for back rent, mortgage and utilities
- Providing temporary support for ongoing housing costs
  - Rent, mortgage, emergency shelter (motel or shelter)
- Providing transportation to look for housing
- Storage for personal possessions (where warranted)

# How EA Helps

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- Set up a household by paying for:
  - Moving expenses and security deposits for rent and utilities
  - Essential house furnishings including one-time purchase of a medically necessary air conditioner
- Storage for personal possessions (where warranted)
- Cover eviction related costs such as late fees
- Court costs/attorney fees require Division of Family Development (DFD) approval
- Finder's fees allowed in extraordinary situations, with DFD approval
- Provide food, until receipt of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, and clothing

# Self-Sufficiency/ Permanency

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What is the goal?

- Affordable
- Permanent
- Sustainable by the resident

# Homeless?

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What it means to be homeless:

- No place to sleep tonight
- Being evicted from an apartment
  - Eviction notice
  - Warrant of removal
- Foreclosure and no utilities
- “Couch Surfing”

# Failure to Plan

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A client has failed to plan if s/he:

- Abandoned permanent housing for a non-permanent housing situation
- Violated lease (i.e. subletting, too many people)
- Took actions that resulted in eviction (i.e. non-payment, drug abuse on property)



# Failure to Plan Assessment

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Failure to plan assessment is based on:

- Time - Landlord is selling the house
- Resources – You did not pay rent, but are getting unemployment benefits
- Capacity to plan

# Homelessness: Circumstances Out of client's control

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Good cause exists when homelessness is the result of circumstances beyond the client's control, and may include but is not limited to:

- Death of partner (primary bread-winner)
- Car breaks down, lost job, cannot pay rent because of other documentable competing legal obligations paid
- Housing no longer affordable, or eviction due to no fault of the recipient (ex. being sold, in foreclosure)
- Severe drug abuse/ mental illness
- Domestic violence

# Homelessness: Circumstances Out of client's control

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Despite the client's best efforts to avert the situation such as paying partial rent, attempting to locate affordable housing, seeking a roommate, etc., homelessness prevails.

# Voluntary Cessation

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EA shall **NOT** be provided to a WFNJ applicant when an actual or imminent state of homelessness exists as a direct result of the voluntary cessation of employment by the adult household member, without good cause.

This is referred to as voluntary quit (VQ) and includes termination from employment.

# EA Six-Month Penalty

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When an adult EA applicant or recipient has failed to plan, without good cause, EA shall not be provided to that applicant/recipient for six months.

# Six-Month Penalty - Reasons

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- Refusing Section 8 housing or subsidized housing, if offered
- Failure to comply with the mandatory activities in the EA service plan
- Eviction from public and/or subsidized housing

# What is Immediate Need?

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*Not automatically eligible for Emergency assistance*

- Applicants who appear WFNJ eligible and have no place to stay tonight or lack minimal clothing to protect their health and safety
- All WFNJ applicants shall be evaluated when applying
- If there is immediate need, it is to be met that day. The application is to be processed that day, if possible
- 30-day limit, within a 12-month timeframe

# Must Complete Application

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- The CWA will determine eligibility for EA
  - The client is not applying for Temporary Rental Assistance (TRA), but EA
  - CWA/MWA has discretion on all placements. Disability, lack of independent living skills, goals for dependence, etc., are considered.
    - Shelter
    - TRA
    - Hotel/Motel



# EA Service Plans and IRPs

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An EA Service Plan and an Individual Responsibility Plan (IRP, only WFNJ) are required

- Clients are referred for various assessments
  - Behavioral Health Initiative (BHI)
  - Substance Abuse Initiatives (SAI)
  - Education Assessments
  - Work/Skill Assessments

*Failure to develop an EA service plan would result in denial of EA benefits.*

# EA Service Plan

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The client searches for permanent housing, and must apply for:

- Section 8
- Housing Authorities
- HUD affordable housing



*Updates monthly, redeterminations every six months.*

Documentation is required.

# Copays – Recipient Contribution

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- 30% of **total** assistance unit income (Ex. SSI, unemployment, child support, etc.) is used as the recipient's contribution or co-pay
- Earned income (net pay)
- Income not considered in eligibility requirements
- All household members, not part of assistance unit, must pay their full share of their portion of the rent

# EA Time Limits

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- Any EA granted shall be limited to 12 cumulative months during a lifetime.
- If you receive 12 months of TANF and then become a GA client, you do not receive another 12 months.

# What Happens After 12 Months of EA?

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If the WFNJ or SSI recipient has taken reasonable steps to resolve the emergency but it continues, or a new one occurs, which causes extreme hardship, then:

- Additional EA shall be granted beyond the 12-month maximum
- For TANF cases – up to two six-month extensions.
- For GA cases – one six-month extension.
- For SSI cases – one six-month extension.

# EA Hardship Extensions

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If someone living in a non-permanent situation is receiving WFNJ and becomes employed, CONTACT THE BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES IMMEDIATELY.

There is a limited time to move them into an apartment...

***BUT IT CAN BE DONE!***

# EA Expansion Program (EASG)

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## Summary of Bill S866

- Amends the current law to expand the EA benefits time limit for:
  - SSI Recipients
  - WFNJ recipients who have a 12-month Med-1 and are permanently disabled
  - WFNJ clients categorized as “chronically unemployable”
  - WFNJ clients who are parents/relatives of a disabled child or dependent and must provide full-time care
  - WFNJ clients who are 60 years or older.

# EA Expansion Program

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## What Has Changed?

- EA Time Limit for the groups mentioned and the population of eligible individuals has been expanded until February 20, 2024.

## What has NOT changed?

- EA rules and regulations
- All of the EA recipients are still limited to 12 months of EA, in addition to the hardship extensions, if eligible



# TIPS to Navigate the System

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- Every action or behavior causing an “adverse action” is to be assessed for “good cause”. Don’t abuse it!
- Go with your client to the Board of Social Services
  - DFDI 19-07-01 – Release of Information
- The MED-1 form must be fully completed and logical.
- Must complete an application to get a denial
  - Receiving a denial allows the person denied to file for a Fair Hearing.
  - Even if a denial is upheld, it documents homelessness.

# Social Services for the Homeless - SSH

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*This is an additional resource, not a WFNJ program.*

For individuals and families who are either homeless, at risk of homelessness or in need of food and are otherwise ineligible for WFNJ emergency assistance through no fault of their own.

# Social Services for the Homeless - SSH

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A county and community administered, short-term safety net program offering four core services:

- Food
  - Shelter
  - Homeless Prevention
  - Case Management
- \* Homeless Hotlines are now administered by NJ 2-1-1

# What SSH Provides

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SSH may only provide:

- Short-term, non-recurring assistance to eligible **families**.
- Benefits for up to **four months**. The four-month limit applies to assistance from **any and all SSH agencies**.
- **Must be able to sustain independence after the program resolves the crisis.**

A family may not receive more than four months of SSH assistance within a 12-month contract year, or more than four consecutive months.

# SSH Eligibility

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- New Jersey Resident
- Working poor individuals and families ineligible for WFNJ/TANF or GA because of income
- Current WFNJ recipients who have exhausted their EA benefits
- Ineligible aliens or individuals with drug distribution convictions who cannot receive WFNJ cash
  - Only the SSH state-funded component may be used for these individuals.



# Thank You

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