



Policy/Procedure:	Disaster Assistance for Colorado Works
Reference:	C.R.S. 26-2-137; 26-2-703; 26-2-706.6 9 CCR 2503-6
Rule/Statute:	Colorado Volume 3.606.8
Effective Date:	3/1/2022

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

In cases of a county, state or presidentially (federally) declared emergency or disaster, families may have immediate and short-term needs for financial assistance to resolve financial crises caused by the disaster. In order to meet these needs in the community, provides a Disaster Assistance program for qualified clients.

This Disaster Assistance policy is in effect only when a county, state or presidential-level disaster has been declared and Routt County has made the decision to activate this policy.

DEFINITIONS

Assessed need - Any identified need of a client or family receiving CW grant payments beyond ordinary, routine living expenses that is designed to deal with a specific crisis situation or episode of need, is not intended to meet recurrent or ongoing needs, and will not extend beyond four months without a new assessment.

Basic Cash Assistance (BCA) - A recurrent cash payment intending to meet ongoing needs.

Client - A current or past applicant or a current or past recipient of a CW grant payment.

Colorado Works - The TANF program in Colorado.

County worker - An employee or designated representative of the county department.

Diversion - A short-term cash payment (not to extend beyond four (4) months) intended to meet an episode of need.

Statewide automated system - The electronic platform used to calculate public assistance program benefits and grant payments.

Supportive payment - A payment and/or service in addition to basic cash assistance or diversion that is based on an assessed need.

Workforce Development (WD) - The program provided to clients determined to be work eligible as described in section 3.607.

POLICY

Activation of the Policy

When a county, state, or presidential level disaster is declared, Routt County will determine whether or not to activate this Disaster Assistance policy based on the impact of the particular disaster in Routt County and available resources. If Routt County decides to activate this policy, the County Director or Economic Security Supervisor will contact the Employment and Benefits Division (EBD) at CDHS_EmplBenDiv@state.co.us to request Disaster Assistance functionality in CBMS to be turned on for Routt County. Disaster payments may be requested while a disaster declaration and associated CBMS functionality is active. Disaster payments may also be requested through the end of the month in which the disaster declaration is rescinded. In cases where latent effects of the disaster appear after the disaster declaration is rescinded, the client may petition for assistance. Assistance will be granted at the County Director's or Economic Security Supervisor's discretion.



Process

Requests for Disaster Assistance are made using state prescribed Public Assistance application methods for Colorado Works. A screening form may be used to differentiate Disaster Assistance requests from requests for ongoing Colorado Works grant payments. Routt County will put forth every effort to streamline processes and remove barriers that could prevent clients from accessing cash assistance during a disaster.

When a disaster is state or presidentially declared, normal Colorado Works verification requirements are waived (with the exception of lawful presence) by the declaration of an emergency and the declaring authority's direct action to suspend certain regulatory statutes. When a disaster is county-declared, verifications normally needed to approve Colorado Works will still be required to approve a Disaster Assistance payment.

Eligibility

As is required to receive Basic Cash Assistance (BCA), the assistance unit must contain an eligible child or pregnancy, and provide for the needs of clients who are lawfully present in order to receive a disaster payment. (A disaster payment may be paid to an assistance unit in which only a child is lawfully present.) Countable annual income must be below \$75,000.

The client's needs must have been caused or exacerbated by the disaster situation. Clients will not be asked to provide proof of their needs in order to receive Disaster Assistance.

At the County Director's or Economic Security Supervisor's discretion, assistance may be provided to a client who is currently under sanction or disqualification status for Colorado Works.

Payment

Payments will be made through the Colorado Benefits Management System (CBMS). Disaster payments may be issued through Diversion or Supportive Payment functionality.

A disaster payment may not exceed \$5,000 per assistance unit per disaster. The actual amount of each disaster payment will be based on the client's actual estimated need.

Payment of Disaster Assistance funds will not affect any lifetime maximums on regular Diversion or Supportive Payment limits that are identified in other county policies and a period of ineligibility (POI) will not be imposed after a disaster payment is made.

Payments will be issued on an EBT card (or via the Key Bank card or direct deposit if the client has previously set up these payment options). After a Disaster payment has been issued to a client, the client shall not be asked to verify how the funds were spent.

Allowable Use of Funds

Disaster Assistance may be used to assist clients with any short-term need identified by Routt County that is related to the declared disaster, except for the following needs:

- medical services (except for family planning, therapy/counseling, and dental services that are not covered by Health First Colorado),



- needs covered by Title IV of Social Security Act that supports children in foster care,
- needs of a client’s children who are not in the home,
- juvenile justice related services,
- purchase of a capital asset (such as a car, home, investment property, etc.) greater than \$5,000.

Deactivation of the Policy

Routt County will email EBD at CDHS_EmplBenDiv@state.co.us to request Disaster Assistance functionality to be turned off due to the end of a county declared disaster or the decision to stop offering Disaster Assistance in Routt County while a state or presidentially declared disaster continues. When a state or presidential-level disaster declaration ends, Routt County. (If Routt County wishes to continue operating Disaster Assistance after a state or presidential-level disaster declaration ends, a county-level disaster may be declared and the policy may be re-activated.)

Signed by:

CHAIR, ROUTT COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

DATE