



Policy/Procedure:	CW Diversion
Purpose:	Identify eligibility criteria for diversion payments
Reference:	C.R.S. 26-2-706.6
Rule/Statute:	CDHS Volume 3.606.8
Effective Date:	3/1/2022

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Routt County recognizes that families may have immediate and short-term needs for financial assistance that, if met, can quickly stabilize the family/assistance unit, thereby diverting a need for ongoing cash assistance. In order to meet these needs in the community, Routt County provides a diversion cash assistance program for qualified families.

The purpose of this policy is to identify the eligibility and suitability criteria for diversion payments, outline programmatic components associated with such payments, and establish a period of ineligibility for receiving ongoing cash assistance, barring hardship, once diversion has been issued. Maximum dollar thresholds are also established in this policy.

A diversion payment is a needs-based, cash payment designed to meet short-term needs. Payments are designed to address specific crisis situations or episodes of need and are not designed to meet basic ongoing needs.

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

In Routt County, diversions are made when:

- There is no need for ongoing support to meet the identified need,
- There is no need for extensive case management or services, and



- The payment is expected to substantially promote or maintain an assistance unit's economic well-being.

Routt County provides cash diversion payments not to exceed \$5,000 total per assistance unit to eligible and suitable clients based upon an established need, in conjunction with the determination that the need is not expected to be ongoing.

Eligibility

To receive a diversion payment, non-financial eligibility criteria for basic cash assistance (BCA) must be met such that the assistance unit could receive a BCA grant payment as determined by the statewide automated system. As is required to receive 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 diversion. (A diversion may be paid to an assistance unit in which only a child is lawfully present.)

Assistance units whose countable income meets the BCA income guidelines (needs standard) may be eligible for a diversion payment. In Routt County, diversion can be issued to assistance units whose countable income exceeds the needs standard and is less than \$75,000 annually.

Assessment, Need and Suitability

Routt County assesses members of the assistance unit at the time of a Colorado Works application and at other relevant times to identify whether BCA or diversion is the most beneficial program for the client. In addition to identifying whether the client would be better served by BCA or diversion, the purpose of the assessment is to identify the needs of the client, and whether diversion is suitable to meet the short-term needs of the client such that they will be able to meet their long-term economic security goals. Assessment for diversion may take place through informal discussion during the eligibility interview and is not required to take place using a specific form. Case comments must identify that diversion was considered, and reasons why BCA or diversion was determined to be the most appropriate option for assistance.

A diversion assistance unit must demonstrate a specific short-term need which, if met, will stabilize the assistance unit, and is likely to ensure long-term economic well-being.

The following criteria must be established:

- The client does not need long-term cash assistance.
- The client demonstrates a specific short-term need. (The estimated cost of the need may be established without external verification by accepting a client declaration determined to be reasonable according to the Prudent Person Principle.)
- The client must have a plan to be able to support themselves ongoing if the one-time crisis situation can be resolved.

If the client has a specific short-term need, but a diversion payment is not determined to be suitable for the client, Routt County will continue to determine eligibility for BCA and issue supportive payments to the client in accordance with the Routt County Supportive Payment policy.



Period of Ineligibility

When a diversion is issued, a client may not receive BCA for a period of time referred to as a period of ineligibility (POI). For this reason, prior to issuing a diversion payment, Routt County will determine that ongoing support to meet the need is not anticipated. The POI begins on the first day of the month in which the diversion payment is provided. Clients who receive a diversion payment must agree to a POI.

The POI may be waived if there is an identified hardship. Hardship for this purpose is defined as an unforeseen, unexpected and otherwise unmanageable event or crisis.

Routt County uses the following guidelines to determine the POI for a Diversion Payment:

- Routt County will exercise POI for Diversion Payment of 12 months unless CW worker identifies hardship.
- Routt County will exercise POI Diversion Payment of two years if household requests three Diversion Payments in three consecutive years. Household may be assessed for BCA.

The length of a POI may not exceed the length of time it would have taken the client to receive the equivalent of the diversion payment in BCA.

Payment

Diversion payments will be made through CBMS. A diversion payment may not exceed \$5,000 per assistance unit. The actual payment amount of each diversion will be based on the client's estimated need. A diversion payment will not be issued in an amount that is less than the client would receive in BCA during the time period of the POI.

The County Director or designee has the discretion to override the amount of a diversion if a hardship exists. In Routt County, the County Director designates override decisions to Economic Security Supervisor.

In addition to diversion payments, eligible clients may receive supportive payments based on the assessed needs of the assistance unit. After a diversion payment has been issued to a client, the client shall not be asked to verify how the funds were spent.

Allowable Use of Funds

Diversion assistance may be used to assist clients with any short-term need identified by Routt County which, if met, will help to alleviate the client's identified barriers to employment or economic well-being, 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.



Terms

Prior to issuing a diversion payment in Routt County, a discussion takes place with the client to establish the following:

- The reason why ongoing cash assistance is not a need.
- The client understands and agrees to the POI.
- The possible impacts on other assistance, including the loss of categorical eligibility for SNAP, transition to low income childcare through the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program, and any other programs the client may benefit from through other agencies.

The discussion shall be documented through comments in the statewide automated system within five business days of the date of the diversion discussion.

Signed by:

CHAIR, ROUTT COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

DATE