



Policy/Procedure:	Hardship Extension for Colorado Works
Reference:	C.R.S. 26-2-716(5), 9 CCR 2503-6
Rule/Statute:	3.606.6
Effective Date:	3/1/2022

## BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

This policy ensures extensions to Colorado Works grant payments are provided where appropriate and as feasible, within federal and state program guidelines. An assistance unit containing an individual who has received Federal TANF assistance in Colorado or another state(s) as an adult for sixty (60) cumulative months may not be eligible for Federal TANF assistance unless granted an extension by the county department due to hardship.

The purpose of this policy is to establish the criteria for a hardship extension beyond 60 months for Colorado Works.

## 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.

**Domestic violence** - (also known as family violence) means a pattern of coercive control one individual inflicts upon another in the context of familial, household, or intimate partner (current or former) relationships including marriage and dating. Violence may be inflicted through a variety of means including, but not limited to:

- A. Physical acts threatening or resulting in physical injury to the individual, including hitting, punching, slapping or biting;
- B. Intimidation resulting in fear of imminent bodily harm through the use of gestures, displays of weapons, or destruction of property, including pets;



- C. Threats of or attempts at physical or sexual abuse or other means of coercion and control, including harm to or threats to harm children, other family members, or pets;
- D. Sexual abuse or threats to inflict nonconsensual sexual acts, including sexual activity with a minor;
- E. Mental, emotional, or psychological abuse including degradation, constant put-downs, or humiliation that results in a reduced ability to engage in daily activities;
- F. Isolation from friends, family, or any type of emotional support system;
- G. Neglect or deprivation of medical care;
- H. Stalking;
- I. Economic abuse or control of finances through withholding money or sabotaging attempts to attain economic self-sufficiency; and/or,
- J. Child molestation, incest.

## **POLICY**

All clients may request an extension when a hardship exists. A client's request for an extension can be made through PEAK, the MyCOBenefits app, verbally, or in writing. Extensions may be granted for up to six months; additional extensions may be granted if circumstances warrant the extension and it is requested prior to the end of the current extension. If a client fails to request an extension on a timely basis, an extension may be granted at the discretion of Routt County.

### Eligibility

To receive a Colorado Works hardship extension, the assistance unit must be eligible for basic cash assistance. Assistance units that contain disqualified members (ineligible non-citizens, clients serving Intentional Program Violations (IPVs), fleeing felons, and drug felons who have not completed action towards rehabilitation) are not eligible to receive an extension. Assistance units that contain excluded members (SSI recipients, recipients of other Title IV income etc.) are eligible to be considered for an extension.

Routt County will consider an extension if the client is experiencing a hardship such as disability, legal challenges, family instability, domestic violence, or issues with finding adequate child care, housing or transportation. Routt County will also consider an extension when employment opportunities are inadequate or unavailable due to layoffs in the area, a lack of jobs due to high unemployment rates and poor labor market in the region, working conditions that present a risk to health or safety, or available job opportunities not aligning with the present skillset of the client.

Routt County will consider not only the client's current hardship, but the history of the client's experience with the TANF/Colorado Works program when making a determination to approve or deny a request.



Process

Clients who are approaching the 60-month time limit on Colorado Works assistance receive correspondence through the statewide automated system starting at 55 months. In addition to this automated correspondence, Routt County will make all reasonable efforts to contact clients who may be eligible for an extension by phone or in person to explain the extension process and to accept a request for an extension. When an extension is requested, Routt County will make a reasonable effort to gather any additional information about the client’s situation required to make a decision.

All extension requests must be data entered into CBMS. In Routt County, the decision to approve or deny a hardship extension is made by the client’s Workforce Development case manager and Routt County will make a determination to grant or deny the extension within 30 days of receiving the client’s request. Written notification of the approval or denial will be issued through CBMS.

Clients who receive a denial of an extension request have the right to appeal and request continued benefits. Clients who are receiving continued benefits after the denial of a hardship extension request and continue to work with a case manager may receive supportive payments at Routt County’s discretion according to the Routt County Other Assistance and Supportive Payments Policy.

Routt County must work with clients to develop a plan to address the causes of the extension. This may include goals that are part of a client’s Individualized Plan, action items to connect with county and community supports, and any other guidance that would be beneficial to stabilize the household. The desired outcome of the plan is for the client to transition off of Colorado Works at the end of the hardship extension.

County Utilization of Hardship Extensions

Up to 20% of the statewide Colorado Works caseload may be granted an extension beyond the 60-month lifetime limit due to hardship. The State of Colorado will notify counties if a concern is identified with nearing the 20% caseload limit, and if such a concern has not been identified, Routt County will consider all requests for hardship extensions without regard to limiting the number of cases that are granted extensions.

Signed by:

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CHAIR, ROUTT COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

DATE