

**ALAMEDA COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS'
General Assistance Blue Ribbon Task Force
(GABRTF)**

Thursday, October 28, 2010

9:30 a.m. – 11:30 p.m.

Supervisor Nate Miley, Chair

Location: *Alameda County Administration Building*
1221 Oak Street, 2nd floor, Room 255
Oakland, CA 94612

Minutes

Welcome, Introduction

Supervisor Nate Miley, District 4, presented introductory comments and welcomed members and guests to the second meeting of the General Assistance Blue Ribbon Task Force. Members and guests introduced themselves.

Recap of last meeting

Supervisor Miley provided a verbal recap of the last meeting, which was held on September 30, 2010.

- Task Force members are expected to attend all meetings. The meetings will be scheduled through the spring of 2011.
- The intent of the Task Force is to develop recommendations for a more equitable General Assistance Program, and then present the recommendations to the full Board of Supervisors.
- No ground rules were established for the task force and attendees were admonished to maintain maturity and professionalism throughout the process
- During the first meeting (9/30/10) Yolanda Baldovinos, Director, Social Services Agency, presented an overview of the GABRTF binder material
- Discussion on what everyone's expectations and visions are for the General Assistance Program
- Providers were asked to have clients come and present testimony to the Task Force, instead of GA clients being on the Task Force.
- Law enforcement was not included in the Task Force

Overview of today's meeting (Oct. 28, 2010)

Supervisor Miley provided an overview of today's meeting, and in addition reported that Dennis Handis, Interim Chief, Probation Department was added to the Task Force for law enforcement input on GA.

Client Testimony and Discussion - Q & A

Otis Winters provided a verbal testimony of his involvement with the County's General Assistance Program.

Mr. Winters was born with Sickle-cell disease and has had health problem for his entire life. Despite his illness, Mr. Winters held various jobs and when he could no longer work he applied for and received unemployment insurance.

Client Testimony *(continued)*

After exhausting his unemployment, Mr. Winters applied for and received General Assistance, until he was affected by the three (3) month time limits the County implemented in April 2010.

Mr. Winters had also tried to find other employment, however his doctor stated that he was unable to work due to his illness(es). However, when applying for an exemption with the GA program, he was told that he was able to work. Mr. Winters' case is currently under appeal, and he has to call in monthly to receive his General Assistance grant. Mr. Winters has since applied Supplemental Security Income (SSI), a federal program. Mr. Winters also stated that he needs transportation and housing assistance due to not being able to afford either with the current GA grant.

Mr. Winters stated some of the problems he has associated with being in the GA Program, including:

- He has to work 25 hours a week (volunteering at the County Food Bank) to receive food stamps
- After being told he is employable by the County he was not able to receive a bus pass to get to his doctor visits
- He is unable to provide any financial assistance to his child (he is the non custodial parent)
- GA should provide some housing assistance because most grants are only enough for rent

Discussion - Q & A

Discussion and questions regarding the client testimony concluded that:

- The 90-2 form for Mr. Winters was turned in 3 months ago and is in review
- Mr. Winters grant is in "aid paid-pending status"
- Client should not have to manually activate (call in every month) grant
- There should not be a work requirement to receive food stamps
- Immediate fix to the 90-2 review process – process forms in eligibility instead of an appeals process
- Social Services Agency does not have a deadline for appeals
- GA clients need referrals to SSI Advocates
- 211 is a number to call for GA clients who need assistance with housing and transportation

It was determined that there are many GA clients who are "in the que" who can't get off of GA and be referred to SSI. However, there is not enough staff and resources to handle this in a timely manner. There could be an increased investment to support SSI Advocacy and get GA clients out of the que (don't understand).

Yolanda Baldovinos will determine what the cost would be for clearing the que.

In addition, several models used in other cities were discussed in the meeting, including the SOAR model, where the most severe clients are expedited to SSI.

Also discussed having workshops (SSI Advocacy) to help masses of people at one time transition from GA to SSI.

Recommendation for Client: Pastor Langford, Healthy Oakland is able to provide Mr. Winters with transportation and housing assistance.

Member Presentation on General Assistance

East Bay Community Law Center (EBCL), Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS)

John Engstrom and Ed Barnes from the East Bay Community Law Center, with members from BOSS, and other advocates formed the Community Coalition for a Compassionate General Assistance Program (CCCGAP). CCCGAP provided attendees with a written report of their vision for the General Assistance Program. [\\Acclus01\cbs-data\\$\BOS-Comms\Program Vision.pdf](\\Acclus01\cbs-data$\BOS-Comms\Program Vision.pdf)

Mr. Engstrom and Mr. Barnes reviewed portions of the report with the attendees and answered their questions.

Wrap Up

Supervisor Miley stated that at the next meeting the CCCCGAP would continue with their review of the report, in addition to more client testimony. Supervisor Miley offered Mr. Winters to make closing remarks regarding what he would like to see in the General Assistance Program.

Mr. Winters stated he would like: 1) no time limits; 2) housing/rent assistance; 3) higher grants; 4) transportation assistance; 5) help with the SSI process and doctors 6) retrain for other industries.

Meeting Schedule

Supervisor Miley stated the next meeting of the GABRTF will be December 2, 2010 at 2pm.

The future meeting schedule of the Task Force is as follows and all meetings will begin at 2:00 p.m. (subject to change):

January 6, 2011

February 3, 2011

March 3, 2011

April 7, 2011

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 am.