



To: All GHVP Providers
From: Maxwell Ruppensburg, Director, Office of Supportive Housing, DBHDD
Date: 4/09/2020
Re: Emergency Changes to Bridge Funding Policies during COVID-19

In response to the Public Health State of Emergency in Georgia as a result of COVID-19, as well as the increasing pressures placed on the homeless and behavioral health system across the state, DBHDD and the Office of Supportive Housing is making programmatic accommodations for Bridge Funding.

It is our intention to provide additional flexibility to ensure the continued stability and wellbeing of the individuals being served by GHVP. To that end, we are authorizing the use of Bridge Funding to cover short-term emergency/transitional housing in the form of hotel/motel stays, as well as for the payment of monthly utility and food expenses for individuals experiencing a financial impact during COVID-19.

Use of Bridge Funding for Hotel/Motel Stays during Housing Search:

- 1. Providers may utilize Bridge Funding to provide individuals with a Notice to Proceed for GHVP with emergency temporary housing through the purchase of a hotel/motel stay.
2. Providers should first pursue the use of Emergency Shelter Grantee hotel/motel vouchers when available in the community.
3. The maximum allowance for Bridge Funding for hotel/motel stays is \$1,500 per household.
4. Providers can submit Bridge Funding claims for hotel/motel stays per normal procedures under the "Other" (T1999-HE-X1) billing code. All receipts should be properly documented.
5. Providers should seek to collaborate within the Region to identify the best possible pricing.

Use of Bridge Funding for Emergency Coverage of Utility Expenses:

- 1. Providers may provide emergency coverage of utility expenses for individuals who are currently housed via GHVP and experiencing a harmful financial impact as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.
2. Providers serving individuals without income should seek the assistance of a DBHDD Medical Eligibility Specialist (MES) and SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Specialist. Contact information for MES/SOAR specialists for all regions is at the bottom of this document.
3. Individuals without employment should receive assistance in applying for unemployment benefits.
4. Providers can submit Bridge Funding claims for utility bill expenses per normal procedures under the "Utility Deposits" (T1999-HE-D1) billing code. All receipts should be properly documented.

Use of Bridge Funding for Emergency Coverage of Food/Grocery Expenses:

- 1. Providers may provide emergency coverage of grocery expenses for individuals who are currently housed via GHVP and experiencing a harmful financial impact as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.
2. Providers should seek support from local food banks and assist eligible individuals in applying for SNAP food benefits prior to utilization of Bridge Funding to cover ongoing grocery expenses.
3. Food expenses should follow the maximum monthly allowance schedule below, based on household size. These amounts are based on federal SNAP standards:

Table with 2 columns and 5 rows showing maximum monthly allowance for food/grocery expenses based on household size: 1 household member: \$194, 2 household members: \$355, 3 household members: \$509, 4 household members: \$646, 5 household members: \$768, 6 household members: \$921, 7 household members: \$1,018, 8 household members: \$1,164, Each additional person: \$146

- 4. Please assist clients with maximizing the use of their budget to meet their long-term needs.

5. Providers can submit Bridge Funding claims for ongoing food expenses per normal procedures under the “Food/Grocery” (T1999-HE-FG). All receipts should be properly documented.

For questions about bridge claims, please contact: GACollaborativePR@beaconhealthoptions.com.

These supports are being extended temporarily as a stop gap measure to ensure the individuals we serve do not experience unnecessary hardship during this crisis. All impacted individuals need to be connected with existing state and federal benefit programs to ensure they can continue to receive available and necessary supports so that their stability can persist after the resolution of this public health crisis.

The policy change providing for Emergency Rental Coverage remains in effect. Providers should ensure individuals are assisted with filing for unemployment benefits if they have lost their employment.

These temporary policy changes remain in effect until further notice and are subject to change.

The work of the provider network remains critical and ever needed during this time of crisis for so many around the state. Please continue to exercise personal caution and recommended physical distancing and hygiene practices to safeguard the health of yourself and those around you.

DBHDD Commissioner Judy Fitzgerald has issued a [letter of exemption](#) explaining the Governor’s Shelter in Place order does not apply to DBHDD provider staff. It is not necessary to use this letter under the law.

Please be sure to regularly check the [CDC](#) and [Georgia DPH](#) websites for the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 and remember to be vigilant about personal hygiene.

- Unemployment applications can be submitted online here: <https://dol.georgia.gov/> or call the local career center to apply by phone.
 - Find the career center locator online here: <https://dol.georgia.gov/locations/career-center>
- Eligibility for food stamps/SNAP has been expanded during this emergency.
 - Apply for food stamps/Medicaid online here: <https://gateway.ga.gov/access/>
 - To find food pantries in your area, text FINDFOOD (one word, no space) or COMIDA to 888-976-2232.

If you have additional questions that relate to COVID-19 please submit them to the provider relations email so that they are properly tracked. That email is DBHDD.Provider@DBHDD.GA.GOV.

We appreciate everything you do!

cc:

Monica Johnson, Director, Division of Behavioral Health, DBHDD
Adrian Johnson, Assistant Director, Division of Behavioral Health, DBHDD
Letitia Robinson, Assistant Director, Office of Supportive Housing, DBHDD
Hetal Patel, Regional Service Administrator, Region 1, DBHDD
Dawn Peel, Regional Service Administrator, Region 2, DBHDD
Gwen Craddieth, Regional Service Administrator, Region 3, DBHDD
Jennifer Dunn, Regional Service Administrator, Region 4, DBHDD
José Lopez, Regional Service Administrator, Region 5, DBHDD
Ann Riley, Regional Service Administrator, Region 6, DBHDD

****MES/SOAR Specialist contact information on next page****

MES/SOAR Specialists by DBHDD Region

Region	Name	Office	Mobile	Email
1	Martinita Smiley-Smith	770-781-6938	404-623-5362	Martinita.smiley-smith@dbhdd.ga.gov
2	LaTarnesha Martin	706-792-7285	706-496-0665	Latarnesha.martin@dbhdd.ga.gov
2	Michi Smith	478-445-3060	404-430-9424	Michi.smith@dbhdd.ga.gov
3	Peter Ward	404-232-1627	404-272-4768	Peter.ward@dbhdd.ga.gov
3	Shekira Davis	404-657-6410	404-548-1009	Shekira.davis@dbhdd.ga.gov
3	Ivori Cullins-Baker	404-232-1564	470-352-9179	Ivori.cullins-baker@dbhdd.ga.gov
4	Corey Stubbs	229-225-3984	229-379-4934	Corey.stubbs@dbhdd.ga.gov
5	Michele Joseph	912-303-4363	912-666-0815	Michele.Joseph@dbhdd.ga.gov
6	Tandra Dickerson	706-568-2304	706-325-5425	Tandra.dickerson@dbhdd.ga.gov

Darren Willis
 Georgia SOAR State Lead
 Budget Compliance/Medicaid MGR
 404-657-1667 Office
 404-804-4121 Mobile
Darren.willis@dbhdd.ga.gov

Regional Service Administrators and Regional Housing Transition Coordinators

Region	Position	First Name	Last Name	Email
1	Regional Services Administrator	Hetal	Patel	Hetal.Patel@dbhdd.ga.gov
1	Housing Transition Coordinator	Scarlett	Freelin	scarlett.freelin@dbhdd.ga.gov
2	Regional Services Administrator	Dawn	Peel	Dawn.Peel@dbhdd.ga.gov
2	Housing Transition Coordinator	April	Edwards	april.edwards@dbhdd.ga.gov
3	Regional Services Administrator	Gwen	Craddieth	Gwen.Craddieth@dbhdd.ga.gov
3	Housing Transition Coordinator	Jamie	Kimbrough	jamie.kimbrough@dbhdd.ga.gov
4	Regional Services Administrator	Jennifer	Dunn	Jennifer.Dunn@dbhdd.ga.gov
4	Housing Transition Coordinator	Rachael	Holloway	rachael.holloman@dbhdd.ga.gov
5	Regional Services Administrator	Jose	Lopez	Jose.Lopez@dbhdd.ga.gov
5	Housing Transition Coordinator	Jeannette	Bacon	Jeannette.Bacon@dbhdd.ga.gov
6	Regional Services Administrator	Ann	Riley	Ann.riley@dbhdd.ga.gov
6	Housing Transition Coordinator	Sam	Page	Sam.Page@dbhdd.ga.gov