
Wisconsin Legislative Council

ACT MEMO



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February 7, 2020

2019 Wisconsin Act 76 [2019 Assembly Bill 119]

State Shelter Subsidy Grant Program and Other Housing Assistance

2019 Wisconsin Act 76 addresses a number of aspects of funding and program requirements related to housing assistance, as described below.

STATE SHELTER SUBSIDY GRANT PROGRAM

The state shelter subsidy grant program is the primary subject of the act, and is modified in three main aspects.

First, the act specifies that if the Department of Administration (DOA) requests amounts set aside in supplemental funding for the 2019-21 biennium, the Joint Committee on Finance may approve the additional funding for the program without finding that an emergency exists, as is otherwise required to supplement an appropriation. To date, \$500,000 GPR has been set aside for each year of the biennium in supplemental funding for the program, under 2019 Wisconsin Act 9, the 2019-21 biennial budget act.

Second, the act identifies certain performance criteria that DOA must consider in determining a shelter's eligibility for a grant under the program. The criteria must include the number of shelter days that are expected to be provided, the shelter's history of successfully transitioning individuals to permanent housing, and whether the shelter provides intensive case management services, among other identified criteria. The criteria must each be considered in light of how a shelter's rules, policies, and procedures may impact how the criteria apply. DOA must continue to consider the purpose and particular need for the funding, and whether the community in which the shelter is located has a coordinated system of services for homeless persons, as required under prior law. DOA must apply the new criteria immediately for any grant using the supplemental funding, and must phase in the new criteria to fully apply to all grants beginning in fiscal year 2023-24.

Third, the act removes a provision in prior law that prohibited DOA from awarding a state shelter subsidy grant to a facility or private home that provides shelter for victims of domestic abuse.

The act also directly modifies certain provisions of DOA's administrative rules for the program, in order to correctly match the specifications in state law for the method of calculating the amount of a grant.

WISCONSIN HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

In addition, the act requires the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) to pay \$1,000,000 from the authority's surplus fund to DOA by June 30, 2020, for deposit in the state's general fund. Under state law, the authority may maintain a surplus fund from the previous fiscal year, from which funds may be allocated among its programs under a statutory process that requires approval by the Governor and the Legislature. According to information provided by the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, as of the most recent WHEDA Board meeting on December 18, 2019, \$1,909,100 in the

surplus fund, which has been approved by the Governor and the Legislature under a general plan, is able to be reallocated for transfer to the state's general fund.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Lastly, the act requires the Department of Health Services to request a waiver or amendment from the federal government, in the administration of the state medical assistance (MA) program, to allow the program to provide intensive case management services to assist homeless persons enrolled in the program in obtaining permanent housing. Currently, a county may, at its option, provide case management services to certain MA recipients who are affected by certain conditions; MA recipients who are homeless are not among the groups for which case management services may be covered.

Effective date: January 30, 2020

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