



Testimony before the Appropriations and Human Services Committees.

*Hurricane Sandy Social Services Block Grant
Supplemental Funds Plan*

*Roderick L. Bremby, Commissioner
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Good afternoon, Senators Harp and Slossberg, Representatives Walker and Abercrombie and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Human Services Committees. My name is Roderick L. Bremby and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS). I am here before you to seek your approval of the Governor's allocation plan for the Hurricane Sandy Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) Supplemental Funds allocation. I am pleased to share with you our concerted effort to providing support and resources to the children, families, individuals and eligible organizations affected by Storm Sandy.

Hurricane Sandy SSBG Supplemental Grant Allocation

The State of Connecticut received a substantial amount of federal funds to assist in the aid, rebuilding and ongoing support of those most affected by Hurricane Sandy in October of 2012. The Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, 2013 [Public Law (P.L.) 113-2] was signed into law on January 29, 2013, providing \$500 million in additional funds to the SSBG program. Of that amount, Connecticut received \$10.5 million dollars. The proposed funding breakout for each federal fiscal year (FFY) is as follows:

- FFY 2013 - \$1,056,920, (*proposed expenses are anticipated to have a ramp-up period in the last quarter.*)
- FFY 2014 \$6,341,515 (*FFY 2014 is anticipated to incur the majority of expenditures*)
- FFY 2015- \$170,757 (*FY 2015 is anticipated to ramp down expenditure activities and close out process functions.*)

Please note that funds awarded under the Disaster Relief Appropriations act are in addition to the department's existing SSBG funds and cannot be used to replace existing SSBG services.

The purpose of the funding is to address necessary expenses resulting from Hurricane Sandy, specifically for social, health, and mental health services for individuals, and for repair, renovation and rebuilding of health care facilities (including mental health facilities), child care facilities, and other social services facilities. Proposed services categories identified to address affected individuals and

non-profit agencies are:

- Case Management,
- Counseling,
- Housing Services,
- Information and Referral,
- Protective Services for Children,
- Protective Services for Adults,
- Repairs/Renovations to facilities and
- Reimbursement of operating expenses.

We are required to ensure that our plan addresses needs arising from the damage caused by Hurricane Sandy and that those needs fall within the goals of the SSBG program and services as outlined in Title XX of the Social Security Act, as amended [42 U.S.C. § 1397 et. seq.]. Title XX requires that States must direct services to one or more of the five social services goals:

- Achieving or maintaining economic self-support to prevent, reduce or eliminate dependency or institutionalization;
- Achieving or maintaining self-sufficiency, including reduction or prevention of dependency;
- Preventing or remedying neglect, abuse, exploitation of children and adults unable to protect their own interests, or preserving, rehabilitating or reuniting families;
- Preventing or reducing inappropriate institutional care by providing for community- based care, home care, or other forms of less intensive care; and
- Securing referral or admission for institutional care when other forms of care are not appropriate or providing services to individuals not in institutions.

Client Eligibility Criteria: Connecticut's existing SSBG funds currently target populations with incomes at or below **150%** of the federal poverty level and it is our intention to use the same income-eligibility criteria for the disaster relief funds. All individuals and families targeted for services must have been affected by Hurricane Sandy and meet additional eligibility criteria established by the state for specific services.

Target Area: SSBG Sandy funds are available to households or service providers located in Fairfield, Middlesex, New Haven and New London counties, and in the Mashantucket Tribal Nation and the Mohegan Tribal Nation.

SSBG client services

Case Management Services. Case Management Services are services or activities for the arrangement, coordination and monitoring of services to meet the needs of individuals or families affected by Hurricane Sandy.

Counseling. Households must have been impacted by Hurricane Sandy to be eligible for services. Counseling includes therapeutic processes as applied to personal, family, situational or occupational problems to achieve a positive resolution of the problem or improve individual and/or family emotional/behavioral progress.

Housing Services. Housing services are those services or activities designed to assist individuals or families in locating, obtaining or retaining suitable housing. Component services or activities may include tenant counseling, helping individuals /families to identify and correct substandard housing conditions on behalf of individuals/families who are unable to protect their own interests; and assist individuals/families to understand leases, secure utilities, make moving arrangements and minor renovations. Households must have been affected by Hurricane Sandy to be eligible for services. Please note that the State of CT also received resources for housing under the Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Relief. The primary purpose of the Funding is to address the immediate unmet housing and economic revitalization needs of our most impacted counties.

Information and Referral. Information and referral services are those services or activities designed to provide information and referral to various community providers and individuals about the availability of services and how to access services.

Protective Services for Adults. Protective services for adults are those services or activities designed to prevent or remedy abuse, neglect or exploitation of adults who are unable to protect their own interests. Households must have been affected by Hurricane Sandy to be eligible for services.

Protective Services for Children. Protective Services for children are those services or activities designed to prevent or remedy abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children who may be harmed through physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, and negligent treatment or maltreatment, including failure to be provided with adequate food, clothing, shelter or medical care. Households must have been affected by Hurricane Sandy to be eligible for services.

Repairs/renovations to facilities

Costs of renovating, repairing, or rebuilding health care facilities, child care facilities, or other social services facilities affected by Hurricane Sandy are allowable under this category. These repairs or renovations must be due to Hurricane Sandy and must not be covered by FEMA, insurance or any other source of payment.

Reimbursement of operating expenditures

Examples of operating expenditures that SSBG disaster funds can cover are costs incurred due to Hurricane Sandy not covered by FEMA, insurance, current contractual obligations, etc.; costs for operating and maintaining staffing levels and operating costs to ensure 24-hour staffing coverage; state required staffing levels for emergency shelters, congregate residences, nursing homes; case management services specific to Hurricane Sandy affected households, etc..

Long Term Recovery Working Group

In the wake of Tropical Storm Irene in 2011, the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection - Division of Emergency Management & Homeland Security (“DEMHS”) established a Long Term Recovery Working Group (“LTRWG”), co-led by representatives from the Department of Insurance (“DOI”) and the Department of Economic and Community Development (“DECD”) and made up of members from state agencies, municipal representatives from the five DEMHS geographical emergency planning regions, federal partners, and non-governmental organizations such as the American Red Cross and United Way 2-1-1. As part of the Hurricane Sandy response and recovery work, a Housing Task Force was formed as a subgroup of the LTRWG, and is currently co-chaired by staff from DECD and Department of Insurance (“DOI”).

Governor Malloy appointed the DEMHS Deputy Commissioner William Shea as the State Disaster Recovery Coordinator, with the two co-leaders of the LTRWG as his designated coordinators. Together they work closely with the FEMA Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator on a variety of recovery functions, including identifying unmet needs, building community capacity, natural and cultural resources, and housing. This Interagency Recovery Coordination Group will coordinate information on all available opportunities for federal funding so as to address the requested assistance from municipalities and various other stakeholders statewide.

Hurricane Sandy SSBG Supplemental Funds Planning Process

The Department’s planning efforts have been conducted in collaboration with our sister agencies, the Departments of Children and Families, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Public Health, and Developmental Services in order to assess the needs of the population these funds are intended to serve. Also, to maximize our information gathering and planning activities, the department:

1. Attended the U.S. Health and Human Services’ Office of Community Services’ webinar entitled, “Social Services Bloc Grant Technical Assistance Webinar for Hurricane Sandy Supplemental Funds” on April 26, 2013.
2. Received consultation from HHS concerning the department’s Hurricane Sandy SSBG Supplemental pre-expenditure report.
3. Reviewed FEMA’s Executive Summary entitled “Disaster Case Management Assessment DR-4087 Tropical Storm Sandy” dated November 2012.
4. Is having on-going conversations with FEMA concerning their Disaster Case Management award and how the department can work to leverage resources for CT citizens.
5. Is participating actively on the Sandy Interagency Long Term Recovery group led by the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS).

In order to ensure the maximum funds assist clients in need directly, administrative costs will be capped at 9% in order to abide by Social Services Block Grant requirements. The department will provide training and technical assistance to providers to ensure that programmatic and administrative costs are

classified appropriately and accurately. Administrative costs are considered to be expenditures incurred for general management functions that benefit a number of programs rather than one specific program. Some examples of what are considered administrative costs for a grantee are accounting, budgeting, personnel, procurement, and legal services functions.

Coordination with FEMA to maximize resources

DSS is currently in conversations with FEMA to access data concerning impacted households that received FEMA services. This will enable us to conduct outreach activities for identified households with income at or below 150% of the federal poverty level to ascertain if they have social service needs as a result of Hurricane Sandy that are not currently being addressed through existing FEMA funding. It is our belief that this population, some of Connecticut's most vulnerable, could benefit from these specific resources. The department will work closely with FEMA's Disaster Case Management providers to maximize resources for those most in need.

Proposed Methodology for Distribution of Funds

1. Fund Administration: Hurricane Sandy SSBG Supplemental Funds will be issued to social services providers that are able to demonstrate uncovered expenditures that were incurred as a result of Hurricane Sandy. To ensure that funds are issued in a timely and uniform fashion, the department will develop a standard application for providers to access resources to cover staffing costs not currently covered by state contractual obligations. Such social services providers would include, for example, emergency shelters, transitional housing providers, domestic violence shelters/housing, congregate housing providers and group homes that required 24-hour staffing during Hurricane Sandy. The department has already begun aggressive outreach to service providers and state agencies to advise and ascertain the need within the affected areas. To maximize resources, the department proposes to utilize an existing service provider that has assisted with fund administration in the past. The service provider will have established and documented processes and procedures in place as to how to review applications, ensure proper documentation is received as well as tracking all issued payments.

After DSS receives approval of the Allocation Plan, the department will reach out to our state partners, coalitions and municipalities; as well as post the announcement on the Department's Hurricane Sandy Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) Supplemental Fund page. Application forms and the process to access funds will be posted on the department's home website.

2. Request for Application for SSBG Services: The department will issue a Request For Applications (RFA) to allow service providers in the identified catchment area to apply for funds to assist households affected by Hurricane Sandy. The RFA shall identify the SSBG service categories and ask respondents to describe how they are currently assisting households affected by Hurricane Sandy without resources or a service delivery gap that is a barrier to self-sufficiency or housing stability.

The Department surveyed a wide range of providers, including health care facilities, child care facilities, and emergency shelters, to determine if any required repairs, renovations or rebuilding. As of June 18, 2013, no providers have indicated needs in this area. As a result, we have expanded our efforts to reach out to other types of social service providers that interface with our sister state agencies. DSS is also currently investigating if we can assist the Department of Housing in maximizing its Hurricane Sandy Resources. For example, we are determining if a social services provider currently identified by DOH for Hurricane Sandy supplement funds through HUD can be served by SSBG Sandy Supplemental Funds. The Department is currently working with the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and we are beginning preliminary conversations with the Departments of Public Health and Developmental Services to determine an estimated dollar amount projected to be needed by each state agency.

Finally, the department will conduct comprehensive outreach support measures through multiple vehicles, expected to include agency website postings; e-mail blast to service providers; e-mail blast to affected households; 2-1-1 information and referral linkage, and outreach efforts to Community Action Agencies through the Human Services Infrastructure partnership, as well as media outreach.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our plan. We respectfully ask for your prompt approval of the plan, in order to facilitate timely submission to HHS and ultimately disbursement of resources to those in need. My staff and I are available to answer your questions.