

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH  
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



**PA 14-161**—sHB 5442  
*Human Services Committee*

**AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE-ADMINISTERED GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

**SUMMARY:** This act makes several changes in the State Administered General Assistance (SAGA) cash assistance program.

The act extends to married individuals the existing SAGA payment standards that apply to single SAGA recipients.

It removes outdated references to families receiving SAGA benefits (see BACKGROUND) and eliminates related requirements that (1) the SAGA payment standard for families equal 73% of the former Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program standard of need in effect on June 30, 1995 and (2) a family eligible for SAGA receive \$50 less than the standard assistance the family would receive under the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program (which succeeded AFDC). It also conforms the law to current Department of Social Services (DSS) practice by establishing a \$500 asset cap for married couples receiving SAGA benefits. By law, the asset cap for an individual is \$250.

By law, families receiving TFA benefits continue to receive assistance (paid from SAGA funds) at the same level after an eligible dependent still living in the household is disqualified from TFA due to age. The provision applies to an eligible dependent who (1) is age 18 to 21, (2) lives with his or her family that is receiving TFA benefits, and (3) would be eligible for TFA benefits if he or she were under age 18. Prior law specified that such a person was eligible for benefits in the amount he or she would receive as an individual under TFA. The act instead limits the benefits to the amount for which he or she would receive as a dependent in a family, rather than an individual, receiving TFA funds. This change conforms the law to current DSS practice.

The act also makes several minor, technical, and conforming changes.  
EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

**SAGA ASSISTANCE STANDARDS FOR MARRIED INDIVIDUALS**

In general, SAGA cash assistance is available to single or married, childless individuals who have very low incomes, do not qualify for any other cash assistance program, and are considered “transitional” or “unemployable.” Prior law established payment standards for single unemployable or transitional individuals but did not set standards for married individuals. Under prior DSS policy, SAGA benefits for married individuals were calculated based on a percentage of the TFA payment standard, which varied depending on where the married individual lived. The act instead extends the same SAGA payment

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standards for single individuals to those who are married. By law, benefits are \$200 per month for unemployable individuals and transitional recipients who must pay for their shelter. Transitional recipients who do not pay for shelter receive \$50 per month.

### BACKGROUND

#### *SAGA and TFA*

SAGA previously provided benefits to families who were ineligible for assistance through TFA, the state's version of the federal Temporary and Needy Family (TANF) program. Under former federal TANF eligibility guidelines, families in which the custodian was not biologically related to the children were not eligible for benefits. SAGA provided assistance to those families until the federal eligibility guidelines were expanded to include them, at which time DSS transferred qualifying families from SAGA to TFA.

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