

CRISIS ASSISTANCE (CA)

Policy

It is the policy of the Financial Assistance Department to provide support to Osage members in times of a legitimate crisis, regardless of place of residence or age. Crisis, by its very definition, requires quick response to circumstances which are beyond the control of our Osage members. The Financial Assistance Department realizes that one of the reasons crisis is so devastating is because most people don't budget for it.

The CA service is available to enrolled Osage Nation members on a first come/first serve basis. Applicants may receive up to \$1,000 in total assistance within a fiscal year. The CA office operates on a fiscal year ranging from October 1st to September 30th. Assistance is individualized and based on immediate needs and resources appropriated by the Osage Nation Congress. The CA office will maintain an accounting for each eligible applicant who has received benefits for each fiscal year.

A benefit will be awarded only when an eligible crisis creates a verifiable need.

Eligible crisis applicants are victims of domestic violence, homelessness, and/or an Osage citizen in need of utility assistance because of the death of a household income provider, natural disaster, and/or illness or injury resulting in incapacitation.

The CA Advocate will work with Osage Nation members to complete CA applications and secure other Osage Nation resources and services that may assist in overcoming the crisis situation. It is the responsibility of the CA Advocate to ensure that all other resources have been investigated prior to submitting completed applications to the Financial Assistance Department Director.

CA funds are not intended for needs such as legal fees, fines, restitution or luxury items such as cell phones, internet, and cable bills.

It is the responsibility of each client to collect and provide all necessary documentation in order for the application to process in a timely manner for review and determination. The CA Advocate applies professional expertise and exercises prudent judgment to determine if there is sufficient documentation to determine eligibility. An individual will not be eligible for CA if the applicant refuses to allow the Advocate to verify or document information relevant to the eligibility determination.

Copies of photo identification will not be accepted via facsimile, but will be accepted in person, via U.S. Postal Service or other mail service, or as a scanned image via email.

In order to be eligible for CA, applicants must:

- Be an enrolled member of the Osage Nation
- Have not received more than \$1,000 in CA funds within the same fiscal year
- Completed a CA application
- Submitted all required and formally requested documentation

Housing assistance is provided for rent, rental deposit, hotel expense, and mortgage payments. Homelessness is defined as

- An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

- An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned buildings, bus, or train station, airport, or camping ground.
- An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately-operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, and transitional housing).
- An individual or family who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where the individual or family temporarily resided.
- An individual or family who will imminently lose their housing, including housing they own, rent, or live in without paying rent, are sharing with others, and rooms in hotels or motels not paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, as evidenced by:
 - A court order resulting from an eviction action that notifies the individual or family that they must leave in 14 days;
 - The individual or family having a primary residence that is a room in a hotel or motel and where they lack the resources necessary to reside there for more than 14 days; or
 - Credible evidence indicating that the owner or renter of the housing will not allow the individual or family to stay for more than 14 days, and any oral statement from an individual or family seeking homeless assistance that is found credible shall be considered credible evidence for purposes of this clause
- Has no subsequent residence identified; and
- Lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing; and
- Unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes who experienced a long term period without living independently in permanent housing;
- Have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over such period, and
- Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment.

The CA Advocate is required to verify all documentation directly with the vendor. Checks mailed to the vendor must be accompanied by the related approved documentation and account numbers printed on checks.

Energy assistance is provided for utilities. Residents within Osage County are eligible after all other Osage Nation program assistance has been denied/exhausted.

In the case of utilities or propane/wood the documentation must:

- Contain the name of the applicant as the account holder or a notarized affidavit must accompany the documentation
- Include contact information for payment directly to the vendor

The CA Advocate is required to verify all documentation directly with the vendor. Checks mailed to the vendor must be accompanied by the related approved documentation and account numbers printed on checks. All checks, with very rare exceptions, will be mailed directly to vendors rather than applicants.

Applicants are required to supply a receipt(s) to the Crisis Assistance Advocate for products/services obtained through provision of funds from the Crisis Assistance Program within twenty (20) business days.

Failure to provide a receipt(s) within twenty (20) business days of notification of award may result in a determination of fraud.

All CA applicants will be informed in writing of disqualification penalties for fraud at the time of the initial interview. This information is provided in writing.

When the CA Advocate believes an individual is withholding or concealing information, or receives information alleging an applicant or recipient may be committing fraud, the case will be investigated by the Advocate and reported to the Financial Assistance Department Director. The Department Director may refer any case to the Attorney General for prosecution.

In cases of fraud verified after receipt of assistance the Osage Nation may:

- Recoup any overpayment
- Request court ordered restitution through the Attorney General
- Request criminal prosecution through the Attorney General

In addition to any or all of the above penalties, the applicant found to have committed fraud shall not be eligible for CA assistance for a minimum of three (3) years.

Applications are available to eligible Osage Nation members on the tribal website, in-office, or by mail.

Application Procedure

- Complete and return a CA application to the Osage Nation Financial Assistance Department. Applications are not considered complete until all requested supporting documentation has been received.
- The CA Advocate assists applicants with completing their application.
- The CA Advocate will respond to all applicants within two (2) business days via phone call or email to confirm receipt and inform the applicant of any missing documents.
- All Applicants will be notified by phone or email within two (2) business days of receipt of a completed application informing them of the date of review by the Department Director.
- The Department Director and Director of Operations, or his/her designee will make a determination within two (2) business days of receipt of a completed application.
- Applicants will be notified by email or telephone within two (2) business days of approval or denial.
- Applicants receiving a letter of denial will be given the reason(s) for denial.

Procedure for Review

- All applications are processed and recorded in the CA database within two (2) business days from receipt of an application.
- The CA Advocate is required to make every attempt to interview each client by telephone, or in-person, to determine the client's most imminent needs.
- The CA Advocate will submit a formal written request for needed documentation explaining to the client why the documentation is required.
- The CA Advocate will schedule a review by the Department Director within two (2) business days of completion of the application.

- The Department Director may determine that an application be kept active prior to making a final determination for the purpose of obtaining additional information.
- The decision of the Department Director is final.