

**§4323. Department of Health and Human Services; responsibilities**

The Department of Health and Human Services shall, in accordance with this section, share responsibility with municipalities for the proper administration of general assistance. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §13 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 689, Pt. B, §6 (REV).]

**1. Review.** The department shall review the administration of general assistance in each municipality for compliance with this chapter. This review shall be made on a regular basis and may be made in response to a complaint from any person as necessary.

The department shall inspect the municipality's records and discuss the administration of the program with the overseer. The overseer or the overseer's designee shall be available during the department's review and shall cooperate in providing all necessary information.

The department shall report the results of its review in writing to the municipality and, when applicable, to the complainant. The written notice shall set forth the department's findings of whether the municipality is in compliance with this chapter.

The department is responsible for ensuring that each municipality complies with its duty to provide trauma-informed services and culturally and linguistically appropriate services as defined in section 4305, subsection 7. The department shall provide mandatory training to municipalities to ensure that a municipality is able to comply with the requirements of this chapter. [PL 2023, c. 575, §5 (AMD).]

**2. Violation; penalty.** If the department finds any violation of this chapter after review, it shall notify the municipality that it has 30 days in which to correct that violation and specify what action shall be taken in order to achieve compliance. The municipality shall file a plan with the department setting forth how it will attain compliance. The department shall notify the municipality if the plan is acceptable and that it will review the municipality for compliance within 60 days of accepting the plan. Any municipality which fails to file an acceptable plan with the department or which is in violation of this chapter at the expiration of the 60-day period shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$500. The Department of Health and Human Services shall enforce this section in any court of competent jurisdiction. Every 30-day period that a municipality is in violation of this chapter after review and notification shall constitute a separate offense. In addition to the civil penalty, the department shall withhold reimbursement to any municipality which is in violation of this chapter until it reaches compliance.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 689, Pt. B, §6 (REV).]

**3. Departmental assistance.** Whenever the department finds that a person in immediate need of general assistance has not received that assistance as a result of a municipality's failure to comply with the requirements of this chapter, the department shall, within 24 hours of receiving a request to intervene and after notifying the municipality, grant this assistance in accordance with regulations adopted by it. The expense of that assistance granted, including a reasonable proportion of the State's administrative cost that can be attributed to that assistance, shall be billed by the department to the municipality. Should that bill remain unpaid 30 days after presentation to the municipality, the department shall refer the bill to the Treasurer of State for payment from any taxes, revenue, fines or fees due from the State to the municipality.

A municipality may not be held responsible for reimbursing the department for assistance granted under this subsection if the department failed to intervene within 24 hours of receiving the request to intervene or if the department failed to make a good faith effort, prior to the intervention, to notify the municipality of the department's intention to intervene.

[PL 1989, c. 840, §7 (AMD).]

**4. Appeal.** Any municipality or person who is aggrieved by any decision or action made by the department pursuant to this section shall have the right to appeal pursuant to the Maine Administrative

Procedure Act, Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter IV. A request for that appeal shall be in writing and shall be made within 30 days of receiving notification. The appeal shall be held within 30 days of receipt of that request and shall be conducted by one or more fair hearing officers. In no event may an appeal be held before a person or body responsible for the decision or action. Review of any decision under this section shall be pursuant to the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 80 C.

[PL 1985, c. 489, §§11, 14 (AMD).]

**5. Emergency contact information.** The department shall collect from each municipality emergency contact information for use by municipal residents in applying for assistance under this section. The department shall forward the municipal emergency contact information periodically to the statewide 2-1-1 telephone number designated pursuant to Title 35-A, section 7108.

[PL 2007, c. 600, §1 (NEW).]

**6. Database.** Beginning on July 1, 2025, the department shall provide overseers access to an Internet-based, real-time database containing the information necessary to properly determine an applicant's eligibility.

[PL 2023, c. 575, §6 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1985, c. 489, §§11,14 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 840, §7 (AMD). PL 1993, c. 410, §AAA13 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 689, §B6 (REV). PL 2007, c. 600, §1 (AMD). RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §202 (COR). PL 2023, c. 575, §§5, 6 (AMD).

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