

Protecting Oregonians with Severe Disabilities

General Assistance: The Next Step — HB 2194



We believe in an Oregon that protects our most vulnerable residents with severely disabling conditions. All Oregonians deserve safety, stability and dignity.

Background: General Assistance to protect adults with severe disabilities has not been funded since 2005, but the need continues. The 2014 Legislative Assembly authorized a study to understand the need and determine recommended next steps. Guided by the Department of Human Services, the General Assistance Steering Committee and multiple state agencies, Portland State University and the Regional Research Institute for Human Services convened this research and produced [the final report](#) January for the 2015 Legislative Assembly.

What is General Assistance?

General Assistance is a temporary benefit provided by many states to assist persons with severe disabilities to apply for, and secure, federal disability benefits.

While awaiting the federal decision of eligibility, which can take years, states provide cash and/or services to help participants meet basic needs. The state is reimbursed when a participant becomes eligible for federal benefits.

The program also provides case management to help vulnerable individuals navigate a complex system.

Research Questions:

- What is the unmet need for Oregonians with disabilities?
- What programs exist within Oregon and in other states?
- Which populations experience the greatest need?
- What program and funding options can address the need?

Research Conclusions:

- Oregonians with severe disabilities struggle to meet basic needs.
- Federal assistance is difficult for individuals to secure.
- Need for assistance exceeds existing program capacities.
- Oregon can supplement federal disability benefits.
- There are new opportunities to meet the need.

Let's restore protections for Oregonians with severe disabilities.

A Pilot Project Proposal: Oregon advocates recommend a modest pilot serving approximately 200 adults with disabilities experiencing homelessness and currently in the Medicaid Presumptive caseload. A housing first model with matching case management supports and a minimal cash assistance grant for basic needs will produce the highest outcomes for state programs and individuals. The full scope of the pilot will be envisioned in an amendment to **HB 2194**.

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