Asylum Process – Services

1. Arrival – Person wanting asylum arrives in Maine.

2. Asylum Seeker goes to General Assistance (GA) for a short interview
   a. Individual/family will need to show passport and disclose how long they have been in the US/Maine
   b. If homeless, GA will send people to either Family Shelter, Oxford Street (men’s shelter) or Florence House (women’s shelter) or they will go to stay with a friend
   c. People apply for Free Care at MMC/Mercy/Parkside Clinic /Greater Portland Clinic
   d. Until they have an A# benefits are very limited thru the City.

3. Vouchers
   a. Families or individuals receive food and non-food vouchers from GA.
   b. Individuals, or couples (sent to separate Shelters), may use soup kitchens or pantries.

4. Living with family/friend
   a. Host/friend can write a dated note/letter confirming that you’re living together. GA will give food and non-food vouchers. In 2017, a single person got about $40 non-food: and about $150 food; family vouchers depend on family size and how much they get for a rent voucher. The more the rent, the less they get for food.

5. Housing
   a. GA assigns a caseworker and determines person’s allotment (through a formula)
   b. GA pays rent, utilities and whatever is left (from your allotment) is given in food and non-food vouchers
      Note: If you have a phone, person might be asked to provide proof of the person paying for phone bill. In addition, the phone bill may be deducted off the vouchers.

6. Vouchers
   a. Once get vouchers, workfare (voluntary work) begins. The amount of work needed is based on the number of vouchers one receives which depends on size of family. $10 = 1 hour
   b. GA has list of accepted workforce places (Oxford shelter, PAE etc.) but in the beginning when people have limited work time and don’t speak any English they may not be asked to do workfare. Taking English classes counts toward workfare. In the beginning people are usually placed at soup kitchen or shelters
   c. In 2017 single person got about $40 non-food and $90 food (subject to change).
   d. Families budget varies depending on family size.

7. Once an asylum seeker gets their A#
   a. Families report to DHHS, 151 Jetport Boulevard, South Portland, to apply for
SNAP (Supplemental-Nutrition-Assistance-Program – formerly called food stamps) and MaineCare.

b. Families apply for TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), which is under the program called ASPIRE which is now handled by the company called Fedcap. After your meeting with a DHHS agent, he/she will schedule a meeting for you to go to Fedcap office, 220 Maine Mall Road, South Portland. All appointments are then with Fedcap, not DHHS (there is no contract with DHHS anymore (unless there are children who might continue to receive SNAP and/or MaineCare).

c. People are expected to report all changes including (e.g: Work Permit, SSN, family size) to Fedcap and/or DHHS

8. Once Work Permit is received
   a. Fedcap ends the month people receive their work permit
   b. People lose SNAP and adults only get emergency MaineCare (children continue to get MaineCare and SNAP).
   c. Asylum Seekers return to GA for benefits (food and non-food vouchers) and Free Care (which pays for doctor appointment but not total amount of medicine).

9. WIC (Women, Infants and Children Food Services), is through Opportunity Alliance at 190 Lancaster Street, 3rd floor, Portland. 207-553-5800
   a. A Program designed to help pregnant women and babies from 0 to 5 years old.
   b. A program that gives food vouchers, diapers and baby formula.

10. LiHEAP/HEAP (Fuel Assistance - Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program)
    https://www.opportunityalliance.org/programs/housing-and-energy-services/liheap/
    a. A program designed to help with electricity/gas bills.
    b. Need to have the following documents when go to the appointment with them:
       i. Proof of address or copy of your lease agreement.
       ii. Passport/Photo ID
       iii. CMP and Unitel bills
       iv. Most recent copy of your GA receipts

11. GA ends 24 months (doesn’t need to be sequential) from first time people use benefits. Hopefully, people are settled and self-sufficient by this time.