

# **H.O.P.E. ~ Helping Our People Eagerly Policies and Procedures**

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of H.O.P.E. is to assist individuals and families with **short-term** financial difficulties. Such difficulties may arise from the loss of a job, a medical condition, divorce, or other unfortunate event. Persons with chronic financial problems may be helped once or twice, but should be referred to an agency for long-term assistance. We serve the people who live within the boundaries of the communities served by Parish of the Precious Blood

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

While our assistance may be similar to government agencies, we must remember that ours is a **ministry** which is rooted in Christ's call for mercy and compassion. All clients must be treated with respect. All information must be kept confidential and we must respect their right for privacy. We must put ourselves in their shoes and treat them as we would hope to be treated.

Parish of the Precious Blood entrusts the Director of HOPE with all funds allocated for this ministry under the auspices of HOPE ~ Helping Our People Eagerly. It is important that the funds be distributed fairly and equitably based upon need. Personal feelings and biases must not be allowed to enter in to the approval process. In an effort to assure fairness and to attempt to serve as many as possible, HOPE Ministries has determined the specified amounts allowed for each type of assistance. These limits should be adhered to unless there are extenuating circumstances, which of course would be documented on the secure spreadsheet.

## **ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT**

HOPE is a function of Parish of the Precious Blood, and the pastor is ultimately responsible for its management. The checkbook is held at the Parish of the Precious Blood Finance Office and the Pastor is the only individual allowed to sign checks for assistance.

HOPE receives its funding primarily from several fundraising events throughout the Parish the largest of which is the Annual Social Action Dinner and Auction. In addition, we receive donations from parishioners and community members from the areas served.

HOPE currently designates \$2400.00 per year for GIFT (Grace Interfaith Food Table) and \$7,000 per year to Helping Hands for Children and Families to be use for emergency fuel assistance. Other short-term needs include: assistance with rent or security deposits, electricity, emergency travel, car repair, clothing, layettes, and emergency medical needs. We also assist in locating furniture for those in need. Occasionally we may need to use funds for this purpose.

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

- Persons needing assistance first call for an appointment. This is scheduled as soon as possible after the request. Presently Office Hours are **Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Fridays, 9:00 AM-12:00 PM.** An answering machine is available when the Director of HOPE is otherwise engaged.
- The interview process exists in order to screen for the depth of need and to keep track of assistance already given.
- Clients are referred to the City Hall or Town Office, ACAP, or various other agencies even before an interview is given.
- Requests for electricity: Obtain account # from the individual and permission to speak to Emera Maine concerning their account. Explain that we provide \$50 when the remaining amount is applied to their account. Emera Maine is called to verify the account information. We make the commitment of \$50 and Emera Maine will notify us when the remaining amount is applied to the account.
- Interviews should be conducted in a private area. On occasion some are done in the individual's home if transportation is a problem. All interviews are confidential.
- Clients should be treated kindly and politely, regardless of their demeanor. Every effort must be made to make the client comfortable by listening attentively as they describe their situation.
- If a client fails to meet the necessary requirements for assistance, clearly explain to them the reasons for the denial. Offer some alternate resources. If there is any doubt it is better to give the assistance. Any possible errors should be on the side of compassion. Notes of doubt can be recorded on the secure spreadsheet for future follow-up and reference.
- Amount of approved assistance should be recorded on the secure spreadsheet following the interview. **Note:** the request is sent to the Finance Office when approved.
- Vouchers of approved assistance should be submitted to the Finance Office immediately following the interview session or when the bill arrives. Checks for assistance will be made as soon as possible.
- Interviewer usually notifies the check recipient of the forthcoming payment.
- All relevant client information will be kept on a secure spreadsheet accessible by the Director and one other person.
- The interviewer should review a client's previous requests on file before a second or subsequent interview takes place.

- No individual or family may receive more than **\$150.00** within a year's time.

## **GUIDELINES FOR ASSISTANCE**

### **Baby / Sanitary needs**

Most baby items can be supplied at the **Pregnancy Care Center of Aroostook**, 184 Academy St. Presque Isle. Tel. #764-0022. Hours are Weds. & Thurs.: 8 AM - 4 PM. If not, the items needed are purchased at Walmart. This is limited to between **\$50.00 - \$100.00**.

### **Clothing**

Generally requests for clothing are referred to:

The Salvation Army in Presque Isle.

The Good Shepherd in Ashland

The Samaritan Thrift Shop in Caribou. This is not reimbursed by H.O.P.E.

If nothing happens here (usually large sizes are difficult to find) HOPE will purchase the items needed at Walmart. This is limited to **\$50.00** or less. Receipts are given to the Finance Office and no exchanges are allowed.

### **Electricity**

**\$50.00** maximum is paid after all else has been supplied. See actual bill or call Emera Maine to verify. Tell them that HOPE will provide **\$50.00** when the remainder of the bill is paid. Emera Maine will call when this is satisfied.

### **Emergency travel**

1) A voucher for **one fill-up of Regular Gas** is given to be used at an Irving station. The client must supply the make, year, color, and license plate number of their car. This is put on the Voucher (good only for Regular gas) along with instructions to the vendor to sign and return to the interviewer. This is matched with bill and recorded on the secure spreadsheet. The bill is then submitted to the Finance Office for payment.

2) For travel to Bangor, a voucher is made for the amount of a bus ticket. The voucher is then taken to the P.I. Mobil where a ticket is left for the individual for the next morning. If the person does not appear, Mobil notifies us and it is reserved for the next person applying for a bus ticket.

3) Car repair is done only after a mechanic has given an estimate. We usually deal with Dick's Transmission as they give us a special rate. When the estimate is in and we agree to no more than **\$50.00** when the remainder is guaranteed.

**Food**

Referral is made to the local food pantries. They are able to take care of any special needs. On occasion we may also have on hand Burger King or McDonald Gift Certificates for the homeless looking for food. There are also emergency food boxes available at the Caribou rectory for those who cannot wait for the food pantry to open.

**Heating fuel**

Refer all requests to ACAP (Andy) at 768-3053. HOPE has designated \$7,000 to ACAP for the year for this purpose.

**Medical**

There is a **\$100.00** maximum. We use Presque Isle Pharmacy and they give us a bill without the client's name for privacy. For over-the-counter needs, items are purchased by HOPE at K-Mart.

**Rent / Security:**

**\$100.00** maximum but usually **\$50.00** after all of the remainder is covered. Before the interview, suggest ACAP especially if children are involved. If we help them first it is no longer considered an 'emergency situation'. We then speak directly to the landlord and arrange for them to supply a bill without the client's name on it. This is sent to the Director of Hope who in turn forwards it to the Finance Office.

**Telephone**

We do not assist with telephone bills because bills build up due to extras the person cannot afford to begin with. We do however refer them to Fairpoint where they can inquire about a program called 'Lifeline' for \$5.43 per month plus a \$10.00 set up fee. There is also 'Safelink' wireless program which is free (including the phone itself).

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