

## **Health & Welfare Department**

The City of Berlin is unusual in that it has a good number of charitable and non-profit organizations within a short distance that serves its population. Over the last eighteen years, the relationship with these organizations has been strengthened through open discussion about community needs, best use of resources, client needs, education, case management and most importantly acknowledging that we are all here working for the common good of the entire community. The General Assistance Office works with other agencies to meet the needs of those in need while taking the concerns of tax payers seriously.

RSA 165 requires that each City and Town have a General Assistance Office. The goal of the law is to ensure that all individuals have their basic needs met. Should someone feel they are unable to meet their basic needs, they can contact the City for an appointment to apply for assistance. In order to ensure that all individuals are treated in a fair and unbiased manner each Town and City is required to have written guidelines. These guidelines include what things each City and Town will assist with, their standards of assistance, what they expect in return and why. The law also requires each Town and City allow individuals to apply regardless of whether or not it is felt they will qualify and that the applicant be provided with a written Notice of Decision. Only once a Notice of Decision is issued can the city require the person to apply with other agencies.

Basic needs include items such as shelter, electricity, heat, clothing, food, medication. Berlin does not count such things such as cable, internet, credit cards, and cell phones. If your Basic needs are more than your income and assets combined, the city will assist with only the difference between the

two things. If the income and assets is more than the basic needs you will not qualify for assistance. It is a very simple and straight forward formula. Assistance is issued in the form of vouchers. The vouchers are issued paid out directly to the vendor so no monies pass through any client's hands.

The law allows for the City to recoup some of the tax payers' money by having a work program. The client's assistance is divided by the going rate for the job performed and they are assigned either to a City office or a Social Service Organization to perform what work is needed. Not only are they working to give back to the community which is helping them but they are practicing working skills, earning a possible recommendation from the job site if they need one for a possible job lead and in some cases they are getting leads on jobs because the job sites get familiar with their personalities and skills and will let them know of positions they find out about.

The City and agencies work together to make each dollar count by using a network of case management and fiscal responsibility of the client. Clients are required to contribute if they have incomes. They are required to do budgets and provide receipts showing they are paying basic needs first. They are also required to show that they have applied and followed through with any and all programs that are there to help long term such as HUD and Food Stamps. If they refuse to follow through with the requirements they will be sanctioned per the law for 7- days the first time and 14-days the second time (if within 6 months of the first time) or until they come into compliance. This is always explained in detail because it is a hard lesson to learn when you are in need and have not taken care of the sanction from the last time you received help, received it and did not follow through. Even at that juncture the Welfare Officer will sit

with a client and brain storm solutions. No one leaves without a plan of action unless they choose to do so.

Of the 286 Families interviewed 74 were approved for assistance. \$26,195.08 was issued in General Assistance.

<b>BASIC NEED</b>	<b>AMOUNT ISSUED</b>
Cremation	\$ 8,455.42
Electricity	\$ 2,250.64
Shelter	\$ 1,100.00
Rent	\$13,268.97
Groceries/Personal & Household Needs	\$ 1,100.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$26,195.08</b>

The City also works diligently to ensure that health and safety are a priority. The Health Officer works closely with the Fire Department and Code Enforcement to investigate complaints and follow through with the multiple steps required by law to hold tenants and property owners responsible for their actions. The laws are there for the safety of all in the community and each person is treated in a fair and equal manner.

The Health Officer is also responsible for the follow up on all tax deeded properties. After the city takes possession, there are many responsibilities that are needed to be kept track of including items such as upkeep, auctions, etc. The City's Health Officer takes care of those details. Berlin is also a self-inspecting City for food licensing and complaints. The local health officer inspects all restaurants, grocery stores, convenience stores, hospitals, nursing homes, bakeries, food trucks, etc. and any place that will be selling food. All complaints are investigated and food borne illnesses investigated locally. This requires that the Health Officer inspect businesses once a year for the license inspections and periodically throughout the year to track cleanliness and whether or not laws are being followed. Then of course there

are required follow ups for any and all complaints.

Over all the 2017-2018 Fiscal year was busy and successful and the department looks forward to working with the community in the next fiscal year.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Martin Giroux  
Health & Welfare Director