



State of New Jersey

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The following Decision is distributed for your information. This Decision has been made in consideration of the specific facts of this case. This Decision is not to be interpreted as establishing any new mandatory policy or procedure otherwise officially promulgated.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FINAL DECISION

OAL DKT. NO. HPW **01696-26 C.S.**

AGENCY DKT. NO. **C189349015 (OCEAN COUNTY BOARD OF SOC. SVCS.)**

Petitioner appeals from the Respondent Agency's termination of Emergency Assistance ("EA") benefits, and the denial of a hardship extension under Emergency Assistance for Special Groups ("EASG"). The Agency terminated Petitioner's EA benefits, contending that he had exhausted his lifetime limit of EA benefits, as well as a six-month hardship extension, and did not qualify for any further extension of EA benefits at the present time. Because Petitioner appealed, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing. On March 17, 2026, the Honorable Gauri Shirali Shah, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a telephonic plenary hearing, took testimony, admitted documents, and the record was closed. On March 24, 2026, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision, affirming the Agency's determinations.

No Exceptions to the Initial Decision were received.

As Assistant Commissioner, Division of Family Development, Department of Human Services, I have considered the ALJ's Initial Decision, and following an independent review of the record, I hereby ADOPT the Initial Decision and AFFIRM the Agency's determinations, based on the discussion below.

EA benefits are limited to 12 months, plus limited extensions for an "extreme hardship" where the recipient has taken "all reasonable steps to resolve the emergent situation but the emergency nonetheless continues or a new emergency occurs, which causes extreme hardship to the family." N.J.A.C. 10:90-6.4(b); see also N.J.S.A. 44:10-51. Specifically, a Work First New Jersey/General Assistance ("WFNJ/GA") recipient may qualify for an additional six months of EA when an "extreme hardship" exists. Ibid. Thus, the maximum amount of EA that a WFNJ/GA benefits recipient may receive is 18 months.

Here, the ALJ found, and the record substantiates, that Petitioner has received his 12-month lifetime limit of EA benefits, as well as a six-month hardship extension, and currently does not qualify for any further extension of any kind, including Emergency Assistance for Special Groups ("EASG"). See Initial Decision at 2-3; see also Exhibit R-1, N.J.A.C. 10:90-6.4(a), (b), (c), and State of New Jersey Senate Bill, No. S866, P.L. 2018, c. 164, effective December 20, 2018 ("S866"), now codified at N.J.S.A. 44:10-51(a)(3), and extended pursuant to State of New Jersey Assembly Bill, No. 5549, and Division of Family Development Instruction ("DFDI") No. 25-02-01. Further, at the time of the hearing, the testimonial and documentary evidence presented did not indicate that Petitioner would qualify for any of the specified EASG groups for which additional benefits may be made available. See Initial Decision at 3-4. Based on the foregoing, the ALJ concluded that the Agency's termination of Petitioner's EA benefits, and the denial of an EASG extension, were proper and must stand. See Initial Decision at 5; see also Exhibits R-1, R-3, R-4, R-5. I agree.



By way of comment, the Agency shall refer Petitioner to any and all agencies and organizations that may be able to assist with his current needs, including Social Services for the Homeless.

Accordingly, the Initial Decision is hereby ADOPTED, and the Agency's determination is AFFIRMED.

Officially approved final version. May 14, 2026

Natasha Johnson
Assistant Commissioner

