

# Grant and Per Diem Program

## CARES Act: Per Diem Rate Waiver

On March 27, 2020, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (P.L. 116-136) passed and Congress allocated additional funding to VA in support of COVID-19 efforts. One provision of this legislation was the ability for the Secretary to temporarily waive the cap on per diem payments to eligible entities in response to the current public health emergency. VA's Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program is temporarily removing the existing cap on per diem rates for Per Diem Only (PDO), Transition In Place (TIP), and Service Center grant awards.

### HOW TO SUBMIT A PER DIEM RATE REQUEST

Per diem rates increases must be requested by completing the GIFTS Requirement that has been assigned for each of your GPD grants. Increases are **not** automatic, and grantees must incur sufficient costs to support the rate requested. **Do not** email rate increase requests directly to our GPD team. Your agency's *GIFTS Account Holder* has been issued a Per Diem Rate Request Requirement to complete.

**Step 1:** Go to the GPD [Per Diem Rate Request website](#)

**Step 2:** Download the *Per Diem Rate Request Worksheet* and *Instructions* that correspond to your GPD project type (PDO, Service Center, TIP)

**Step 3:** Complete the *Per Diem Rate Request Worksheet*, per the instructions

**Step 4:** Have your agency's *GIFTS Account Holder* access the GIFTS Requirement for each of your grants and complete the requested information

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**What is the earliest effective date of my rate increase request?**

March 27, 2020, the date the CARES Act was enacted.

**What is the maximum rate I may request?**

Currently, the GPD per diem rate does not have a cap. Grantees will use the *Per Diem Rate Request Worksheet* to document their estimated cost of care and calculate their requested per diem rate.

**NOTE:** GPD is still only authorized to pay up to 100 percent of allowable costs of care, minus any other sources of income. Costs attributable to the GPD program must be allocable, allowable and reasonable as required by the OMB Grants Management Circulars. Additionally, cost allocated to the grant must be within the scope of what the grantee has been authorized to provide, per their grant application and GPD regulations. Grantees must closely monitor their costs to ensure that they have not overstated their costs. Grantees that overbill VA will be indebted.

**By what date do I have to submit my rate increase request to have my increase backdated to March 27, 2020?**

Grantees that properly submit their per diem rate request through the GIFTS Requirement by May 31, 2020 may have their rate increases backdated to March 27, 2020. Grantees will indicate their requested start date on their Per Diem Rate Request Worksheet. Some grantees, for accounting purposes, may choose for their increases to begin April 1, 2020.

**What would be my start date if I submit my rate increase request June 1, 2020 or later?**

Requests received June 1, 2020 or later would be the first of the month following the month the properly submitted request was received. For example, a request submitted June 1, 2020 would have an effective date of July 1, 2020.

**I have already submitted my March/April voucher to my liaison and received payment. Can I still receive a backdated rate increase?**

Yes, you would submit a supplemental voucher for the difference between your prior per diem rate and your new per diem rate for each month that you are requesting payment. In this example it would be 2 supplemental vouchers; one for March and one for April.

**What are allowable costs that I may spend this additional per diem funding on?**

This higher temporary per diem rate is intended to support the additional operating costs associated with serving Veterans during this public health emergency. Grantees may allocate all traditionally allowable operating costs, in addition to costs incurred to provide Veterans with safe isolation spaces during COVID-19. These costs include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Costs associated with additional space, or social distancing strategies in GPD transitional housing facilities;
2. Costs associated with isolation strategies for Veterans that are vulnerable or symptomatic (e.g., temporary use of hotel/motel rooms to isolate Veterans);
3. Overtime for staffing costs to provide coverage;
4. Cleaning supplies to ensure facilities are appropriately disinfected;
5. Toiletries to support hand washing hygiene for Veteran participants;
6. Ensuring food security and transportation needs for homeless Veterans; and
7. Personal protective equipment for staff and/or Veterans with symptoms.

Note, grantees are responsible for monitoring their incurred costs, at least monthly, to ensure the rate requested is appropriate. Grantees would be advised to identify COVID-19-related costs in their record-keeping in case of external review and for their own internal accounting purposes.

**My GPD operating costs were in excess of my approved per diem rate from October 1- March 26. Can I use the per diem waiver to recoup actual costs incurred prior to the enactment of the CARES Act?**

No. This funding is available to support additional costs from the date of enactment of Cares (March 27, 2020) and is available until the end of the national public health emergency or until VA rescinds the per diem waiver, whichever occurs first.

**For how long is my “temporary” per diem rate increase in effect?**

GPD has received approximately \$88M in CARES Act funding which we are using to support increased per diem rates. The uncapped per diem rate is subject to further revision at some later point based on changes in legislation or availability of funding. Should this occur, grantees will be notified. Additionally, the Secretary has the authority to rescind the per diem limit waiver at any time to control costs, if needed.

**Can I bill this new per diem rate for Veterans that are absent from the program? Can I bill for empty beds that I am not filling because of social distancing?**

GPD can pay for Veteran absences under certain conditions, per the [CARES Act Guidance](#). However, grantees may not bill for empty beds as this funding is intended to help grantees maximize their bed utilization. Note, grantees should closely monitor their actual costs to ensure their per diem rate remains accurate when billing for Veteran absences.

**May I increase the number of GPD beds that I am authorized to provide under my GPD grant?**

No, rate increase requests are to be based on your agency's current bed authorization and utilization.

**I am applying for a FY 2021 GPD grant award. If awarded, will the higher "temporary" per diem rate be available during FY 2021?**

The GPD Program Office is exploring funding options for FY 2021 but, decisions about the availability of funding for the continuation of higher per diem rates has not been determined. It is expected that the Department will have more information regarding increased funding availability in FY 2021 later this summer for applicants that are selected for these awards.

**How will I be notified of my approved per diem rate and effective date?**

Grantees will receive an email via GIFTS that will notify them of their approved per diem rate and effective date. Please allow up to 5 business days for our office to process the request. If you do not hear from our office, please email [GPDFiscal@va.gov](mailto:GPDFiscal@va.gov) to follow up on your request.

**I have a Transition in Place (TIP) which has a fixed award amount. May I still request a per diem rate increase?**

TIP grantees that believe they can support a higher per diem rate within their existing award balance may submit a rate increase request.

**Am I required to request a rate increase?**

No, grantees must incur enough costs to support the rate requested. If your current per diem rate is adequate, then you would not complete the GIFTS Per Diem Rate Requirement. The requirement would remain open in your GIFTS account and available for completion at any time during the fiscal year.

**I have a Special Need grant. Does this change impact my Special Need grant?**

Special Need grantees may request a per diem rate increase for their associated PDO grant that overlays their Special Need grant.

## GIFTS REQUIREMENTS

**How do I access my GIFTS account?**

The GIFTS grantee portal can be accessed from: [https://www.grantrequest.com/sid\\_5937?SA=AM](https://www.grantrequest.com/sid_5937?SA=AM)

**How do I change my agency's GIFTS points of contact?**

Grantees that would like to update their point of contact in GIFTS should email their FAIN(s) to [GPDgrants@VA.gov](mailto:GPDgrants@VA.gov). A contact update requirement will be published to the *GIFTS Account Holder* for your FAINs which can be completed.

## How do I change my agency's GIFTS Account Holder?

Grantees that would like to update their GIFTS Account Holder should email their FAIN(s) to [GPDgrants@VA.gov](mailto:GPDgrants@VA.gov) with the name, title and email address of the individual that will serve as your agency's Account Holder. Grantees must use a business email address (not gmail.com, yahoo.com, etc.)

## How do I reset my GIFTS password?

Grantees can use the "forgot password" option on the GIFTS sign-in page.

When resetting a password, keep in mind that:

1. You will receive an email from [mail@grantapplications.com](mailto:mail@grantapplications.com) with a temporary password. Sometimes this can take 10-15 minutes.
2. Please note that you will want to save [mail@grantapplications.com](mailto:mail@grantapplications.com) as an approved sender or add it to your contact lists as emails generated directly from GIFTS will come from this address.
3. Once you receive that email, click on the link, type in your email address, and the temporary password.
4. It will prompt you to create a new password. Then, you should be logged in to GIFTS.

A few tips about temporary passwords from GIFTS:

- Zeros, the capital letter O, ones, the number 1 or L (lowercase) may look similar. If one doesn't work, possibly try another.
- Passwords cannot be copied and pasted so you may want to write it down and then type it.
- Lastly, sometimes there is a period at the end of the password. This is not part of the password.

## ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

Additional per diem rate request guidance can be found on the GPD Per Diem Rate Website:

[https://www.va.gov/homeless/GPD\\_ProviderRate.asp](https://www.va.gov/homeless/GPD_ProviderRate.asp)

Additional COVID-19 guidance and resources can be found on the GPD Provider Website:

[https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/GPD\\_ProviderWebsite.asp](https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/GPD_ProviderWebsite.asp)

OMB Grants Management Circulars – Allowable Costs:

- Factors Affecting Allowability of Costs ([2 CFR 200.403](#))
- Reasonable Costs ([2 CFR 200.404](#))
- Allocable Costs ([2 CFR 200.405](#))