

Indiana Legal Services, Inc

www.indianalegalservices.org

Township Trustees

What is a township trustee?

Trustees are elected people in each township who help the poor obtain certain basic necessities. The trustee may help with shelter or housing costs, utility bills, food, clothing, medical needs, burial expenses, or school supplies. Trustee assistance is considered “last resort” assistance. You first must try to get help with other agencies and/or family members.

Does the trustee give me cash?

No. The trustee does not give you cash. Instead, the trustee may issue a “voucher” (like a coupon) to a landlord for rent, or help you find a place to stay. Some trustee offices have a supply of food to give to people in need, while others may give vouchers to a grocery store.

Can anyone get trustee assistance?

To get trustee assistance, you need to have low income and you must truly need the items you are asking for. Each trustee may have a different standard of eligibility. Depending upon the trustee’s standards, you may receive assistance even if you already receive TANF. If you receive food stamps, you may receive food assistance from the trustee if your food stamps are lost, stolen, destroyed, or under other special circumstances.

Where do I apply?

Apply at your local township trustee’s office. Check the phonebook for the number and address of the trustee. If you cannot find it, check with your local county clerk’s office to find your township’s trustee. You should apply for assistance in the township where you live.

The trustee must make a decision on all applications within 72 hours, not counting weekends and holidays. In an emergency, the trustee may be able to help you the same day.

How do I apply?

You will have to fill out an application for assistance at the trustee’s office. You should bring with you proof of your income and finances. This can be pay stubs, or TANF records. Bring proof of your household situation (social security numbers, birth certificates of household members), receipts for expenses during the last month, and information and any documents regarding the

situation you need help with, like a rent-due notice. If you have any referrals from other agencies, bring those as well.

Can the trustee turn me down?

Yes, the trustee can turn you down. However, the trustee must follow its own standards when deciding whether to help you or not. Be sure to ask the trustee to give you a written “denial slip” if the trustee refuses to help you. The slip must tell you the reason for the denial, and must tell you about your right to appeal the denial.

What should I do if I am denied?

If you are denied help from the trustee, you can appeal. You have 15 days from the date of the denial to file an appeal of the decision. Be sure to appeal if you have any question about the denial. If you don't appeal, the denial is final. You should fill out the appeal request that is on the back of the denial slip. Make a copy of the denial slip and the appeal request for yourself, and give the original to the Board of the County Commissioners of your county. (Some counties have an office set up to receive these appeals. Check your denial slip carefully to see where you should take your appeal). You can generally mail your appeal or take it to the office or Board in person. A hearing will be scheduled within 10 days of the Commissioner's receiving the appeal request.

What happens at the hearing?

At the appeal hearing, the Commissioners (or a hearing officer) decide whether you should have been helped, either under the trustee's own guidelines or under the Indiana poor relief law. You can have an attorney represent you at the hearing or you can go by yourself. It is helpful to have an attorney. Contact a private attorney or your local legal services program if you are appealing a denial of assistance from the trustee as soon as you file for the appeal hearing.

Can the trustee make me work?

If you get trustee assistance, you might have to work for the township's workfare program. However, you will not have to work for the workfare program if:


1. You are not physically able to work.
2. You are a minor or you are at least 65 years old.
3. You are needed to care for someone else because of that person's age or physical condition.
4. You are employed full time.
5. You are attending a training program through the township trustee.
6. The trustee determines there is no work available.

Can the trustee make me apply for other programs, such as food stamps or TANF?

Yes. If the trustee thinks you could be getting help under another program, the trustee can tell you to apply for help under that program. If you do not apply, the trustee can refuse to help you.

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