



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR COVID Task Force

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FINANCING FUTURE FLIGHTS and TENTATIVE FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Pago Pago, AS, Feb.13, 2021 -- The GAR, Lt. Governor Talauega, stated, "Now that we have completed this first test flight and all the costs have come in, we have made decisions on some outstanding issues including passenger airfares. This week, we have explained to our quarantine passengers the need for the cost share which the Governor has set at \$500 for this flight and the March 10 flight. We will assess this cost for every flight. We want to thank our quarantine passengers of the first test flight for their patience and their understanding of our decision on the need for the flight cost share." The quarantine facilities, meals and other costs associated with the repatriation efforts will continue to be subsidized by the government for now.

The American Samoa Government paid the cost for the first Repatriation Test Flight with the financial support of all the outgoing passengers whose cost shares accounted for more than half of the cost of the charter. In assessing the government's ability to continue the repatriation flights after obtaining the total costs of this first test flight, available financial resources from the local and federal government are not sufficient to sustain all the costs of the future repatriation flights.

Governor Lemanu Mauga stated, "In order for us to keep our repatriation flights going, we need all the help we can get. We know we can help subsidize some of the costs to help our people, but the government cannot subsidize all of the costs. We are getting assistance from LBJ and Medicaid who are covering the costs of their medical referral patients. The DOI subsidy will also help, but it is not enough. To help our people, I have approved the cost share for the *incoming* first and second flights to be \$500 per passenger partially subsidized by the government and children under 2 years old will travel home at no cost."

Hawaiian Airlines is helping by issuing refunds to all American Samoa residents with unused tickets between Honolulu and American Samoa. Passengers may request a refund directly from HA at their Honolulu office or their Tafuna office.

**For more information on the ASG Repatriation Flight,
please contact the Emergency Operations Center (EOC):**
EMAIL: repatriation@medicaid.as.gov
Telephone: (684) 699-4778 or 699-4779

GAR Lt. Gov. Talauega, explained, “The government is very grateful to the US Department of Interior’s Office of Insular Affairs for the \$1.6 million grant to help with repatriation and it looks forward to receiving those funds. The DOI funding will provide \$300,000 for flights for three months. A single flight cost \$300,000 round trip with only 160 incoming passengers—this cost may increase when we increase the number of passengers. The rest of the funding will be used to help pay for the costs of the quarantine facilities, meals and personnel costs required to manage and coordinate the extensive tasks to implement the ASG Repatriation Plan. Although there is leftover CARES Act funding available, it is insufficient to sustain a long-term plan for repatriation flights.”

GAR Lt. Gov. Talauega further added, “We must never forget that the first priority of our government is to prevent the virus from coming into our territory and to protect our people. That is why our incoming flights have stringent quarantine and testing procedures. Our administration planned to execute these repatriation flights as soon as we got into office as a matter of public policy, but it was never going to be for free. We have learned after this first flight that it cost our government approximately \$2 million to do one repatriation flight. Medicaid was instrumental in enabling the first flight by fronting the full cost of the Feb. 1, flight. With nearly 1800 people now registered on the DOH website, we need to plan for several flights to accommodate repatriation, medical referrals, students, essential workers, ASG and federal employees. We can only do one flight a month due to costs, quarantine and personnel limitations. Once repatriation flights are completed, the government may suspend flights while it works with Hawaiian Airlines to plan for regular commercial flights depending on the COVID situation.”

ASG IS TENTATIVELY PLANNING FOR THE FOLLOWING FLIGHT DATES (subject to change):

Repat Flight 2.0 – Wednesday, March 10, 2021

Repat Flight 3.0 – Wednesday, April 15, 2021

Repat Flight 4.0 – Wednesday, May 12, 2021

Repat Flight 5.0 – Wednesday, June 16, 2021

Repat Flight 6.0 – Wednesday, July 14, 2021

Plans for additional flights will be reevaluated as we progress. The cost share will also be reassessed per individual flight.

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REFUNDS FROM HAWAIIAN AIRLINES

Thanks to the support of Hawaiian Airlines, travelers from American Samoa who were stranded in the U.S. due to the territory's closed border policy may receive a refund of their unused tickets. They may request a refund of their un-used tickets on Hawaiian Airlines—to and from American Samoa. Because American Samoa's borders remain closed, there is a special refund code for Hawaiian Airlines used for passenger refund requests from stranded American Samoa residents. If you are unable to request a refund online, travelers wanting a refund can go to the HA office in Honolulu or in Pago Pago to process their refund requests. Although voluntary, the government encourages people who are holding HA tickets to request refunds to apply towards any cost share of the repatriation flights.

Given the uncertainty of the containment of the COVID-19 virus in the U.S., it remains unknown when American Samoa's borders will reopen to regular commercial flights.

PAYMENT OF THE \$500 SUBSIDIZED COST SHARE for the Feb. 1 and March 10 flights.

Please request a payment form from the Medicaid office via repatriation@medicaid.as.gov, or call 699-4777, 699-4778 or 699-4779. Anyone can take this payment form to the American Samoa Revenue office at the EOB in Utulei, to make payment. The copy of the receipt of payment must be provided to the Medicaid office.

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