The Emergency Financial Assistance (EFA) program’s objective is to increase access to care and improve the overall quality of life of adults with cancer as they journey through the cancer experience. Providing financial support to adults in active treatment for cancer, this assistance covers critical non-medical needs such as housing payments, groceries, utilities, fuel for transportation, and other basic living expenses. Each grant recipient receives an EFA grant between $500 up to the maximum of $850, depending on household size. Funding from Susan G. Komen would be restricted to breast cancer patient requests only, with a $50,000 grant allowing us to assist between 60 – 100 patients. In all, by March 30, 2017, Angel Foundation will provide critical financial aid (up to $850) for daily basic needs to 400 indigent male and female breast cancer patients residing (or receiving treatment) in the 7-County Twin Cities metro area.

To maintain a strict system of accountability, grant checks are written directly to the vendor (e.g. mortgage lender or utility company), with Cub Foods, Schwan’s Home Delivery or Holiday gas cards provided to the patient for groceries and transportation costs. Knowing that financial distress can negatively impact physical recovery and wellbeing, EFA grants are a life-line for patients: oftentimes preventing utility shut-offs and housing evictions; helping buy groceries for patients and their families; or providing fuel for patients unable to travel to treatment.

Eligible applicants must be at least 18 years old with a verified cancer diagnosis, meet financial criteria (200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines), be in active treatment, and reside (or receive treatment) in the 7-county Twin Cities area. *Patients outside the Metro and in greater Minnesota can receive funding if they are being treated in the 7-county area.* In 2016, 13% of total grantees lived outside the 7-county metro, including 10% of breast cancer grantees. EFA guidelines define active treatment as chemotherapy, radiation, bone marrow transplant, hospice, palliative care, or surgery with recovery time in excess of 4 weeks.

Working with their oncologist, patient navigator, social worker or financial counselor, patients often discuss the expenses that come with a cancer diagnosis. Through extensive community outreach, we work with over 250 of those patient advocates – making sure they are aware of the services offered by Angel Foundation. Thankfully, having such a large base of referral sources in the oncology community means that many underserved populations can still access our services without worry about language or cultural barriers.

Statistically, the majority of patients come to us within the first three months of treatment and the top three assistance requests are for 1) groceries, 2) fuel for transportation and 3) housing costs. Especially in the case of fuel requests, the EFA program is key in helping breast cancer patients access quality services and stay in / progress through the continuum of care. For those patients that qualify, an EFA grant can often be the only source of income until they can get back to work, recover from surgery, or apply for long-term medical assistance. Knowing many patients need help immediately, our EFA staff review applications daily (Mon-Fri), with approved applicants typically notified within 5 - 7 business days. This prompt and crucial financial aid allows patients to take a respite from financial and emotional worries, continue their treatment, and focus on survivorship.