

Social Assistance and You

Developed by the Community Advocates
Network

c/o North End Community Health Centre
2165 Gottingen Street Halifax, NS B3K 3B5

Policies for Persons with disabilities

Everyone who applies for income assistance in Nova Scotia has the right to apply as a person with a disability. This is important to know because there are things people with disabilities can get that are different from what others get.

Definition of disability: There is no clear definition of disability as there was in the Family Benefits program. What the policies and regulations say is that if you have a “life situation” and/or “health” barrier to employment, you will be seen as disabled.

Eligibility: Everyone who asks for income assistance will have an employment assessment done to test for employability.

From the policy manual: “employability” means the many factors that assist a person to be more self-sufficient, including but not limited to skills, education, learning experience, work experience, life situation, health, goals, volunteer activities, resources in the community, availability of transportation, child care and personal supports”

The first step is that the case worker asks you three questions about your ability to work. If you are not able to work, you will be classed as (4) not required, meaning you do not have to have an employment plan. You can also be classed as a (2) temporarily excused, meaning you have some illness or disability that the worker thinks will get better. You will be asked to get a medical form filled out by your doctor.

From the regulations: “employability assessment” means an assessment to determine whether a recipient or a spouse of a recipient is employable at the time of the assessment and, if not employable at

the time of the assessment, includes an assessment of the measures or activities that can reasonably be undertaken by the recipient or spouse to enable the recipient or spouse to become employable;

Medical Form: The medical form is the same one used in the Family Benefits program. The best way to make sure this form is accepted as proof you are disabled, your doctor must say you are permanently disabled and unlikely to work again, or disabled for at least one year but may improve with treatment. It is a good idea to go over the form with the doctor, so he or she is clear about what the answers mean.

Shelter Allowance: if you are a single person with a disability, fleeing an abuse relationship, with chronic mental, cognitive or physical condition that limits participation in employment, or 55 years or older, you can have up to \$535 for your rent or \$223 for board. You can also get more than these amounts if you must live in an accessible building because of your disability. Be sure to make this known to your worker.

Work Incentive: You are allowed to keep the first \$150 you earn. After that, 70% of your net pay will be taken from your cheque. Don't forget you can get transportation costs of up to \$150 per month with receipts and up to \$400 per child per month for daycare.

CPP back pay: Some people who get income assistance because they are disabled may also be able to get Canada Pension disability. You have to apply for this at the Canada Pension office, or call them and ask them to send forms. Your income assistance worker may make you do this even if you don't qualify because you haven't worked enough years or you are not disabled by CPP rules.

Your worker may also make you sign an “assignment form” which gives CPP the right to send your back time directly to income assistance if you have been on assistance for all of the back time CPP owes you. If this is not the case, then CPP will send you some and income assistance some.

If you get all of your back CPP money and you owe some to Income assistance, it may be possible to make a deal where you are able to spend the money on basic items of assistance, furniture, a mortgage or repair on your house if you own it, or medical supplies.

Special Needs: As a person with a disability you have a right to things you need such as transportation to medical appointments, maybe to get groceries and other needs, to medical items such as over-the-counter medications, including vitamins and other things ordered by your doctor. wheel chairs. Be sure and look at the **Special Needs sheet** that is a part of this manual to look at the list of things you might be able to get if you need them.



Important Phone Numbers

Adult Mental Health—424-4232 or Blue pages of phone book

Childrens’ Mental Health 902-424-5650

Community Supports for Adults 1-877-424-1177

Continuing Care (Home Care) 1-800-225-7225

Department of Community Services—blue pages of phone book

Dalhousie Legal Aid Service 902 - 423 - 8105

Disabled Persons Commission 1-800-565-8280

Debtor Assistance 1-800-670-4357

Halifax Coalition Against Poverty (HCAP) 444-5060

Income Assistance Appeals 902-424-2768

Residential Tenancies Board 1-800-670-4357

Senoir Citizen's Secretariat 1-800-670-0065

Senior's Pharmacare 1-800-544-6191

Women's Centres are in Antigonish, New Glasgow, Sydney, Port Hawkesbury, Sheet Harbour, Bridgewater, Yarmouth

Transitions Houses for women abused by intimate partners are in Halifax, Sydney, New Glasgow, Bridgewater, Kentville

Community Advocates Network: Our membership is made up of First Voice people, who are directly affected by social assistance reform, as well as groups, organizations and agencies. Together with first voice people, active members include

**AIDS COALITION OF NOVA SCOTIA
ADSUM HOUSE
ADSUM COURT
ALICE HOUSING
CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSN.—DARTMOUTH BRANCH
CANADIAN NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND
COMMUNITY ACTION ON HOMELESSNESS
CONNECTIONS CLUBHOUSE
CORNERSTONE FAMILY CENTRE
DALHOUSIE LEGAL AID SERVICE
DARTMOUTH FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE
DISABLED INDIVIDUALS ALLIANCE
FEEDING OTHERS OF DARTMOUTH
HALIFAX COALITION AGAINST POVERTY
MENTAL HEALTH SOCIAL CLUB
METRO NON PROFIT HOUSING
METRO RESOURCE CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING
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RESTORING DIGNITY
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