



Social Assistance Handbook

*A GUIDE TO THE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND*



SOCIAL PROGRAMS

Toll Free: 1-877-569-0546

Charlottetown

Sherwood Business Centre
161 St. Peter's Road

Phone: 902-368-6440

Email: sa@gov.pe.ca

Montague

Access PEI
41 Wood Islands Road

Phone: 902-838-0700

Email: sa@gov.pe.ca

Souris

Access PEI
15 Green Street

Phone: 902-687-7170

Email: sa@gov.pe.ca

Summerside

Access PEI
120 Heather Moyses Drive

Phone: 902-888-8122

Email: sa@gov.pe.ca

O'Leary

Access PEI
45 East Drive

Phone: 902-859-8811

Email: sa@gov.pe.ca

Interested in applying?
Do you have questions about
our eligibility criteria?

Call our screening line at
1-877-569-0546

About this Handbook

This handbook is for people who are receiving or who may want to apply for Social Assistance. It can help you understand:

- *How to apply or appeal a decision;*
- *The social assistance program.*

This handbook gives basic information. The details of your application will depend on your situation. Each application is different and unique.

Defining Social Assistance

The Social Assistance program can help you when you do not have enough money to pay for your basic needs, such as food, shelter and utilities. It may also provide money for other needs such as medications, glasses and/or furniture.

The amount of money you may receive depends on your:

- *Financial need;*
- *Family size; and*
- *Housing type.*

Who Can Apply?

To apply for Social Assistance, you must be:

- *18 years of age or older;*
- *A PEI resident.*

Social Supports Coordinators will help you with your intake to the program and to understand what supports are available.

Program Belief Statement

As staff of the Social Assistance Program, we will make every effort to:

- *Recognize a person's right to apply for assistance;*
- *Treat people with respect;*
- *Protect people's privacy;*
- *Recognize people's right to make their own choices;*
- *Promote self-reliance;*
- *Provide quality service;*
- *Promote excellence;*
- *Be well-informed about other supports and services;*
- *Work in partnership with our clients;*
- *Maintain our own well-being.*

Our Promise to You

Our service standards are how we ensure quality service.

As our commitment to you, we will:

- *Return phone messages and emails within two business days;*
- *Welcome a friend, family member, or advocate to any appointment;*
- *Tell you what is needed to complete your application;*
- *Assess your application fairly, according to the Act and Regulations of the Social Assistance Program;*
- *Let you know if your application is approved within two business days of the application being complete;*
- *Send your first payment within the month you are eligible.*

Client Rights & Responsibilities

A client is any person who applies for Social Assistance. As a client, you have the right to:

- *Apply for Social Assistance;*
- *Receive quality services;*
- *Be treated with respect;*
- *Have your application reviewed according to the Acts and Regulations of the Social Assistance Program;*
- *Expect to receive money and services if your application is approved;*
- *Ask someone for help – a friend, family member, or advocate;*
- *Appeal a decision if you disagree;*
- *Ask to see your file;*
- *Expect privacy regarding the information in your file.*

You are responsible to:

- *Provide evidence of need;*
- *Always provide complete and true information;*
- *Report changes to your finances or living situation;*
- *Repay any money that you were not entitled to receive;*
- *Actively look for work, if you are an employable person;*
- *File your Income Tax Return, each year, on time;*
- *Explore other ways to receive money; for example: Employment Insurance (EI) or the Canada Pension Plan (CPP).*

It is a good idea to keep notes of appointments, names, and telephone numbers of people you talk to. There is a space for notes at the end of this handbook.

Understanding Social Assistance

Social Assistance payment is based on your financial need. You have a financial need when your basic needs are more than your income. This section will explain basic needs and different types of income and how these are used to assess your application.

Basic Needs

Basic needs include food, clothing, household supplies, personal items, shelter, and utilities (power, heat, fuel, water).

These needs are assessed based on your living situation and the size of your family.

Other Needs

Depending on your situation, you may have other needs included in your application:

- ***Telephone;***
- ***Transportation costs;***
- ***Security deposits for rent or utilities;***
- ***Laundry expenses;***
- ***Child care;***
- ***Optical care.***

These expenses are not included when assessing your need:

- ***Cable television;***
- ***Car payments and/or car insurance payments; and***
- ***Other debts a person has before they apply.***

Income

Income is money you receive. The program looks at two kinds of income: earned and unearned.

Earned Income is money you get from working:

- *Wages or salary;*
- *Self-employment;*
- *Babysitting.*

Unearned Income is money you get from other places:

- *Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security;*
- *Employment Insurance and Worker's Compensation;*
- *Gifts or gambling winnings.*

Excluded Income is money you receive that is not counted in your application:

- *Canada Child Benefit;*
- *Child Support (Maintenance Enforcement Payments);*
- *Foster care payments;*
- *HST & Income Tax refunds.*

All income needs to be reported.

Earned Income Exemptions

The Earned Income Exemption allows you to keep additional income over your monthly Social Assistance payment when you work.

By working, you have an opportunity to build job skills, experience and take advantage of additional income exemptions.

If you are single and have no dependents, up to \$250 is exempt per month plus 30% of the amount over \$250.

If you are a couple and or have dependents, \$400 is exempt per month, plus 30% of the amount over \$400.

Example:

Bobby has two children and worked in January earning \$600.

Bobby's earned income = \$600

Earnings exemption = \$400

Amount left over = \$200

30% of the amount over \$400 = \$60

Bobby's Total Exemption = \$460 (\$400 + \$60)

\$460 of Bobby's earned income will not be counted in their assessment

Example:

Jane is a single adult and worked in January earning \$1000.

Jane's earned income = \$1000

Earnings exemption = \$250

Amount left over = \$750

30% of the amount over \$250 = \$225

Jane's Total Exemption = \$475 (\$250 + \$225)

\$475 of Jane's earned income will not be counted in their assessment

Applying for Social Assistance

To apply for Social Assistance, call the toll-free screening line at **1-877-569-0546** to screen for eligibility and to be booked for an intake appointment with a Social Supports Coordinator.

Documents with the Application

When you apply for Social Assistance, you will be asked to provide documents about yourself, your family, and your financial situations. These documents are part of your application.

Bring these documents when you meet with the Social Supports Coordinator for your intake assessment. They need the documents to assess your application. A checklist is provided on the following pages.

*Remember to ask questions!
Social Supports Coordinators are here to help.*

What is an intake appointment?

An intake appointment is your first meeting with a Social Supports Coordinator to review your situation to see if you qualify for Social Assistance.

At your intake appointment, you may need to provide documents about yourself, your family, or your situation. The documents are part of your application.

To start, the Social Supports Coordinator will complete an application with you and review the documents you have provided to ensure they have everything need to assess your application. They will explain how the program works and answer your questions.

The Social Supports Coordinator will explain the Applicant Declaration which is part of your application. It is a legal document that requires signatures.

When you sign, you agree to:

- ***Follow the program rules; and***
- ***Allow verification of your information***

It is important to understand the Applicant Declaration before you sign. Please ask questions.

Documents Checklist

Document	This Applies To	✓
Identification	Each adult family member	<input type="checkbox"/>
Citizenship	Each person born outside Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>
Direct Deposit Information	Primary Applicant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bank Statements	Each adult with a bank account	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pay stubs for the last 31 days	Each adult that is employed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business Financial Records	Each self-employed adult	<input type="checkbox"/>
Record of Employment	Each adult who recently stopped working	<input type="checkbox"/>
Verification of income	Each adult family member	<input type="checkbox"/>
Confirmation of Residency	1 person per household	<input type="checkbox"/>
Utility bills	1 person per household	<input type="checkbox"/>
Verification of expenses	Each adult who pays an expense	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical Information	As needed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Verification of custody	As needed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Income Tax Returns	As needed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Notice of Assessment (NOA)	As needed	<input type="checkbox"/>

Additional Supports

Financial Assistance Drug Program

When you receive Social Assistance, you are automatically enrolled in the Financial Assistance Drug Program. This program provides coverage of approved medication costs.

Some medications are approved by special authorization only. If your doctor prescribes a medication in this category, they can submit a Standard Special Authorization Request form to have a medication considered for coverage.

If your medication is not included in the PEI Pharmacare Formulary, it is be eligible for coverage. The PEI Pharmacare Formulary can be viewed here:

PrinceEdwardIsland.ca/en/information/health-pei/pei-pharmacare-formula

You can fill your prescription at any community retail pharmacy located in Prince Edward Island.

Provincial Dental Care Program

When you receive Social Assistance, you are automatically enrolled in the Provincial Dental Care Program. The program covers the cost of dental services such as exams, cleaning, and fluoride treatments.

You can access dental services at Health PEI Dental Public Health Clinics or at private dental offices.

Receiving Social Assistance

When you receive Social Assistance, you provide information about your needs and income every month. The Social Supports Coordinator lets you know what documents you need and when to submit them.

If your situation changes, the amount of Social Assistance you receive may change. Some examples include:

- *Your relationship status changes;*
- *You have more or fewer children in your care;*
- *Your employment or income changes.*

To remain eligible, you need to:

- *Work towards being self-reliant;*
- *Be compliant with your case plan;*
- *Report any changes in your situation;*
- *Complete a new application form each year or any time your relationship status changes.*

If you have questions, talk to a Social Supports Coordinator.

Case Planning – a Plan for You!

Each adult in your household will have a case plan developed within the first month of receiving Social Assistance.

A case plan identifies your goals and the steps needed to meet them. Your case plan will be made for you and will include what is important to you, and what may be important for you.

Case plan goals may include:

- *Finding employment;*
- *Upgrading your education or skills;*
- *Wellness activities;*
- *Connecting to additional supports and/or services;*
- *Working towards self-reliance.*

To remain eligible, you need to:

- *Work towards being self-reliant;*
- *Be compliant with your case plan;*
- *Report any changes in your situation;*
- *Complete a new application form each year or any time your relationship status changes.*

Case planning is an ongoing process between you and your Social Supports Coordinator. They can help you set realistic goals and talk to you about programs that support you reaching them!

Being self-reliant means different things for different people. Some may want to work on education or training, others on job skills. It may mean doing volunteer or part-time work.

Self-reliance is about finding what is right for you at this time. It is based on your family, future career or employment goals, and the resources available in your community.

Stopped Payments

You may stop receiving social assistance if you:

- *Do not comply with your case plan;*
- *Do not look for work;*
- *Refuse to work or do not use resources that help you get work;*
- *Hold back information about your income or relationship status;*
- *Have enough income to meet your financial needs;*
- *Make false or misleading statements;*
- *Leave a job without cause;*
- *Get fired.*

If this happens, you have the right to appeal the decision. Contact a Social Supports Coordinator to discuss your options.

Requesting an Appeal

If you disagree with a decision, you can appeal it. A Social Supports Coordinator can help you with the appeal process.

Once you file an appeal, the Social Programs Appeal Board will schedule an appeal hearing within 15 days of the arrival of the appeal request.

You can bring information to support your appeal and someone to speak on your behalf.

When an appeal takes place, the Appeal Board will respond with a decision in writing within 15 days of the hearing. You may also contact your Social Supports Coordinator to ask if a decision has been made and what that decision is.

If you disagree with the decision of the Appeal Board, you may ask for a second review within 10 days of receiving the written decision if you are able to provide new information.

Finding Other Resources

Many places can help a person in need. The Social Supports Coordinator can guide you to services in your community, such as:

- *Federal and provincial government agencies;*
- *Community groups;*
- *Non-Profit organizations;*
- *Health organizations;*
- *Indigenous organizations (band councils, land corporations).*

Overpayments, Deposits, and Repayment

An overpayment is when you receive more money than you're supposed to. If this happens, you have to pay the money back. If you receive a damage or utility security deposit, you also have to pay this back. For repayments, a minimum payment of \$25 will automatically be subtracted from your Social Assistance payments each month, until it is paid. If you stop receiving Social Assistance, you will still need to make arrangements to pay this back.

If you are overpaid or receive a security deposit, talk to the Social Supports Coordinator about how to repay the money you owe.

Note: If you receive a damage or utility security deposit back after your over payment been paid in full, it is yours to keep and use on your next unit.

Important Reminders

Report all changes in your finances or living situation right away.

Explore all income sources available to you and your family (for example: Employment Insurance or Canada Pension Plan).

File your Income Tax Return each year. This may provide more income including an HST refund or Canada Child Benefit.

Alternative Programs

Other Government programs may help you meet your needs:

AccessAbility Supports

Helps Islanders living with disabilities. Help is available under five areas of support including: Personal, Housing, Community, Caregiver, and Financial.

Child Care Subsidy

Assists Islanders with the cost of child care and daycare services for children up to and including 12-year-olds. Assistance is available for Islanders who are working, attending school or at home - depending on your situation and income level. The program is flexible and offers a range of options for support.

Housing Assistance

Provides low income Islanders with appropriate housing at a reduced cost. For qualified applicants, this might be renting a social housing unit, receiving a rent supplement or mobile rental voucher that reduces the cost for rental market housing. The program is needs-based with priority given to those assessed to be in the greatest need.

Seniors Housing Program

Many seniors find that their housing needs change over time. You may find your income is less than in earlier years or you may find it more difficult to maintain your home. You are eligible to apply if you are aged 60 and older, or 55 and older and have a disability. You will be chosen based on your income, assets, health, age and present housing.

Seniors Independence Initiative

Provides financial assistance for practical services making it easier for seniors to remain in their own homes and communities. Help is available for services such as light housing keeping, meal preparation, or snow removal and complements supports provided to seniors by Home Care or family members for daily unmet needs.

People Under 18 years old

To qualify for Social Assistance, a person must be at least 18. Minors living away from their parents may qualify for Social Assistance if:

- *You have no parents or guardians;*
- *Your home is not safe for you to live in; or*
- *You have conflicts that keep you away from home*

People Facing Family Violence

If you or someone you know is experiencing family violence, help is available. Social Assistance provides financial support to meet the emergency needs of people experiencing family violence.

211

If you need help and don't know where to start, dial 2-1-1.

211PEI is a support service offered by United Way of PEI, in partnership with the Province of Prince Edward Island to help Islanders navigate the network of community, social, non-clinical health and government services available across the Island

<https://pe.211.ca/>

