

Act/Regulations Reg.	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Social Assistance	13
	Instructions	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	1-1
Effective:		Authorized by:	Page:
Revised: November 1, 2007		Director of Social Assistance	1 of 6

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1. The Social Assistance Program is designed for the individual (family) who is unable to provide for him/herself the basic necessities (i.e. food, clothing, shelter), or meet special emergency situations of need.
2. While Social Assistance is generally a cash payment, the service may be supplemented by problem-solving and referral services. Appropriate referrals are made to other agencies where complementary services may be obtained. Field staff also assist in the development of employment or training plans with individual clients, as well as helping clients explore alternative sources of financial support.
3. Although the Social Assistance Program is, in the first instance, a cash-payments service, there is a parallel expectation to ensure that preventive and rehabilitative measures are taken where possible to assist the applicant to return to, or to develop toward, some level of independent functioning. Hence, the field worker delegated to deliver the service is obligated, together with the client, to ensure a service plan is developed with tasks/activities that are directed toward increased self-sufficiency.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

4. The authority for the Social Assistance Program is contained in the *Social Assistance Act* (2005) and the Social Assistance Regulations.
5. Under the provisions of the *Social Assistance Act*, the Minister shall provide assistance or services to “persons in need”. This assistance shall be provided in such manner and under such terms and conditions as may be prescribed by Regulations or approved policy.
6. Section 7 of the *Social Assistance Act* provides the Lieutenant Governor in Council with the authority to make regulations to facilitate the efficient and effective administration of the Act. In addition, Section 4.4(5) of the Social Assistance Act Regulations empowers the Minister, via the Director of Social Assistance, to determine policy and procedures which will further guide the administration of the *Social Assistance Act*.

Act/Regulations Reg.	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Social Assistance	13
	Instructions	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	1-1
Effective:		Authorized by:	Page:
Revised: November 1, 2007		Director of Social Assistance	2 of 6

COST SHARING

7. Canada Assistance Plan Act (1966). Revoked on April 1, 1996

The major significance of the Canada Assistance Plan was that it abandoned the categorical approach to public assistance and provided for the payment of assistance in relation to the fact of need rather than to the cause of need. Hence, this Province was enabled to terminate its former Mothers' Allowances, Disabled Persons' Pensions, Unemployment Assistance, Old Age Assistance, and T.B. Assistance in favour of one all-inclusive assistance program. The Social Assistance Act simply makes provision for payment of assistance to "persons-in-need" without any requirement to sort applicants into categories of eligibility. Under the Canada Health and Social Transfer (which replaced the CAP as the federal funding transfer mechanism) the only explicit criteria is that there is no residency requirement imposed on individuals seeking assistance.

PRIMARY PRINCIPLES

8. In the administration and delivery of the Social Assistance Program, the following statements and beliefs act as guidelines in which to place a context around the relationship between the client, worker, and the Department:

- (a) Every individual has a right to seek assistance in attempting to meet his/her basic needs and develop self-reliance;
- (b) The dignity and value of the person should not be compromised in the individual's seeking of services;
- (c) Most individuals prefer to be self-sufficient rather than dependant, and services provided should be directed toward that end;
- (d) To facilitate growth toward independence, individuals or families should be encouraged to take on tasks which they can complete by themselves;
- (e) Generally, families are open and prepared to help other family members, and service intervention should not erode this traditional practice;
- (f) Individuals or families usually know what their problems are and wish to be directly

<i>Act/Regulations Reg.</i>	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Social Assistance	13
	Instructions	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	1-1
Effective:		Authorized by:	Page:
Revised: November 1, 2007		Director of Social Assistance	3 of 6

involved in making decisions on how best to solve these problems;

- (g) Workers are expected to develop, with the individual or family, a case plan agreement identifying a commitment to specific goals, tasks and services;
- (h) In seeking assistance, the individual has a responsibility to comply with the expectations and obligations of the service process;
- (i) Client information obtained by the Department of Social Services and Seniors while providing services is confidential and may be shared only with other organizations as set out in Section 6 of the Social Assistance Act and/or the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP) of Prince Edward Island. It is our legal obligation to protect information and set standards for appropriate collection, use and disclosure of information as set out by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP) of Prince Edward Island. If clients have questions about the collection, use or disclosure of their personal information they should contact the FOIPP Office at 894-0304.
- (j) Opportunities to build confidence, develop experience, and enhance training and skills are essential for staff to maintain the provision of quality service.
- (k) Public/community perceptions and views with respect to any public program are powerful influences; hence, a sensitivity to these perceptions is necessary in order to ensure a base of support for the program;
- (l) Resources (budget allocations, staff) to deliver the program are limited; hence, in order to ensure that those in need are assisted, program management must be disciplined.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

9. The Social Assistance Program shall provide the basic necessities of living to those who for physical, mental, social or other reasons are unable to provide for their own basic needs.

10. The Program shall provide timely and appropriate services to prevent social dependency or, where dependency exists, to prevent it from being ongoing.

Act/Regulations Reg.	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Social Assistance	13
	Instructions	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	1-1
Effective:		Authorized by:	Page:
Revised: November 1, 2007		Director of Social Assistance	4 of 6

11. The Program will strive to enable individuals or families to achieve normal social functioning to the extent possible.

PROGRAM EMPHASIS

12. The Department has an ongoing commitment to provide assistance and services to those in need. In order to prevent new employable clients from falling into the cycle of Social Assistance dependency and to remove long-term employable clients from the cycle, the Department has structured the Social Assistance Program to:

- (a) Explore opportunities for employment and/or training to improve or restore the applicant's capacity to support the applicant and his/her dependants;
- (b) Provide appropriate assistance (emergency, short-term and long-term) depending on the circumstances of the applicant;
- (c) Provide efficient administration of and accountability for Social Assistance.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF

13. The role of the worker and supervisor in delivering Social Assistance is extremely difficult, and requires constant vigilance to ensure an appropriately balanced response between the applicant and the interests of the larger community who provide the available funds. The Regulations and policy instructions are written to reflect that balance, generally, although individual judgement is frequently required in case decision-making.

14. Staff must respond with sensitivity to the requests of applicants and also attempt to respond in ways that will enable positive growth and change within the limits of program policy and required accountability. Investigation and verification of information is necessary to establish need or eligibility. Information may be shared as part of a mutually agreed upon counselling or problem-solving process or to determine eligibility. Applicants must, at all times, be treated with dignity and respect.

15. Program staff have a responsibility to maintain good communications with local authorities responsible for health, social and community services as a part of timely and appropriate responses to persons in need.

Act/Regulations Reg.	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Social Assistance	13
	Instructions	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	1-1
Effective:		Authorized by:	Page:
Revised: November 1, 2007		Director of Social Assistance	5 of 6

16. For those employees with authority delegated by the Minister, the Social Assistance Act Regulations address the following specific responsibilities:

- (a) Initiate preventive and rehabilitative measures where possible (Act s. 4.3);
- (b) Maintain confidentiality of information concerning applicants at all times by informing clients in advance the purpose and authority for collecting personal information and providing a contact title and number should they have questions or concerns about this collection and in accordance with the following criteria:
 - (i) no information about any applicant is to be communicated, or allowed to be communicated, to any person not legally entitled to that information;
 - (ii) information respecting an applicant may be shared with other Government departments, agencies or persons where that information is required in the provision of assistance or services to the applicant, and upon those non Government agencies not agreeing to specific standards;
 - (iii) information concerning assistance provided, and the date on which the assistance was provided, may be disclosed for program evaluation, provided that the name, address or other identifying information of the applicant is not thereby revealed;
 - (iv) information obtained under the Act or regulations may be disclosed pursuant to a subpoena by a Court of competent jurisdiction; or
 - (v) any information obtained under the Act or regulations may be disclosed or communicated to any person, agency or government department with the written consent of the applicant about whom the information relates (Act, s. 6);
- (c) In relation to determining eligibility, make an inquiry into the living conditions, financial resources and other circumstances of the applicant, and record on the appropriate forms (Reg. s. 5(1));
- (d) Advise the applicant(s) of the availability of the appeal process and the method of access to it (Reg. s. 22 (2));
- (e) Provide assistance when entitlement has been established (Reg. s. 6(2));
- (f) Provide other social services where there is demonstrated need (Reg. s. 20);
- (g) Conduct periodic reviews of an applicant's circumstances to determine eligibility and amount of entitlement (Reg. s. 5(6)).

<i>Act/Regulations Reg.</i>	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Social Assistance	13
	Instructions	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	1-1
Effective:		Authorized by:	Page:
Revised: November 1, 2007		Director of Social Assistance	6 of 6

RESPONSIBILITIES OF APPLICANTS

17. Persons who apply for Social Assistance are required to provide evidence of need. An applicant must demonstrate that he/she has explored (within the limits of his/her ability and circumstances) every possibility of self-support, including the resources that are or may be available to him/her from family members.

18. Social Assistance applicants are required to make a formal statement disclosing present and potential income as well as past and present assets, and be prepared to provide evidence in support of their application. An applicant may be required to verify circumstances by supplying such documents as receipts, birth certificates, marriage certificates, orders of divorce or separation, bank statements, statement of earnings or pay stubs, income tax returns, medical reports, all homeowner documents (mortgages, agreements for sale, certificates of title) and confirmation of assets, etc.
(Reg 4 (4))

19. Applicants are expected to take advantage of opportunities that will lead toward or establish financial self-sufficiency. Therefore, an individual's eligibility for benefits shall be determined with consideration given to the availability of training or employment opportunities.

20. The Social Assistance Act regulations require every person in receipt of Social Assistance to notify the Department of any change in circumstances. Persons who defraud the Social Assistance Program are open to criminal and/or civil legal action.

SERVICES TO APPLICANTS

21. One of the three primary objectives of the Social Assistance Program is to provide financial assistance to persons in need. Some applicants have needs for other services and may request assistance with personal or family problems. Upon assessment of individual or family abilities and needs, the worker should explore with the client appropriate resources available to aid in strengthening the capacity for independence and prevention of further deterioration of the applicant's situation.

22. An applicant who is not satisfied with a decision made with respect to his/her application may request an appeal hearing before the Appeal Board.