

Social Assistance

Anyone residing within the 'Namgis First Nation reserve can apply for assistance.

The following information (some is paraphrased and some info is word for word) is from the *Social Development Policy and Procedures Manual*, Volume 1, Income Assistance Program, BC Region, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC):

The policies and procedures contained in the Manual reflect current BC Provincial Government policies and procedures in the administration of the Social Development Program. However, where possible and permissible, certain provisions exist to reflect the differing circumstances of person resident on Indian reserve land.

Rights and Responsibilities of Applicants and Recipients:

Rights

- To make application when they believe they are in need
- To be given the information and assistance needed for them to make proper application for the program
- To have all personal information treated as private and confidential
- To be free of any consideration of race, gender, colour, creed, or political affiliation in the administration of this program
- To receive prompt, courteous, efficient, and fair treatment
- To have their eligibility determined on the basis of objective evidence as required by program policy
- To receive all assistance and benefits for which they qualify under the policy and procedures established in the Policy Manual
- To be informed of eligibility entitlement in writing if they so request
- To appeal decisions concerning an application for, or provision of a benefit
- To be informed of their responsibilities regarding initial and continuing eligibility

Responsibilities

- To disclose any information that is required under the policy and procedure established in the Policy Manual
- To complete all required eligibility forms in a proper manner
- To take maximum personal responsibility for achieving increased or complete independence
- To, if required by policy, seek work at all times, and to be available for all work for which they are qualified
- To, if employable, participate in employability programs that may be available
- To use all available resources and income to support themselves as the preferred alternative to social assistance

- To inform the Social Development office promptly of changes in their circumstances that may affect eligibility

Application for Assistance:

To apply, an applicant must provide the following:

- Two pieces of ID, one of which must be picture ID.
- One piece of ID for a spouse and children
- Must supply proof of a Social Insurance Number (SIN). This can be from government correspondence or a Tax Assessment.
- Proof of residence – Rental Agreement, House Purchase Agreement
- Utility bills (hydro, Telus)
- Bank statements for all accounts
- Proof that you require financial assistance (tax returns, bank statements, Record of Employment, pay cheque stubs, Child Tax Benefit Statements)

Information on Asset Limits for new clients:

Cash

- single, employable clients: deductions for amount over \$150.00
- with dependents – deductions for amount over \$250.00

Vehicle

- Equity in the first vehicle above \$5,000, the application/recipient is deemed to be ineligible due to assets in excess. Equity over \$5,000 may not be added to the total family asset calculation. The onus rests with the recipient/applicant to provide documentation as to the value of the vehicle.
- Canadian Red Book may be used to verify a vehicle's market value. If vehicle older than what is listed and the value of a listed vehicle is less than \$5,000, the vehicle is not considered an asset.
- Once market value is determined, money owed on the vehicle must be deducted from the value to determine the equity.
- Leased vehicles are not considered an asset
- Vehicle equity limits do not apply to Persons With Disabilities or their dependents. (A few other categories are also listed regarding COPH, foster parents with disabled children.)

Failing to Accept or Pursue Assets

Applicants/recipients who fail to accept or pursue assets may be ineligible for income assistance. This rule applies one year prior to application or while the recipient is on assistance. The period of ineligibility lasts 30 days for each \$2,000 of the value of the assets not accepted or pursued.

Further Information Regarding Applying for Assistance

Clients (and their partner/spouse) are asked to complete documents such as the Application for Social Assistance and sign Consents to Release ('Namgis First Nation, any employers they have recently worked for, BC Ministry for Social Development, Service Canada for Employment Insurance benefit entitlement).

Only after all documents are received (including confirmation from Ministry that an applicant has not already received assistance) does a client become eligible for assistance. Basic assistance will be provided on a pro-rated basis if the application is approved after the 1st day of the month. Shelter is not pro-rated but paid in full for the month if the applicant has not already paid these shelter costs.

Please note that AANDC does not allow us to reimburse clients if their bills are already paid. We can only provide assistance for bills that have not yet been paid.

Monthly Declaration Renewal Slips

If clients are in need of assistance for the following month, these forms need to be completed in full and brought into the office by the 15th of the month.

If a client receives money from the time their last slip was brought in, they must declare this money. Not all money declared is exempt from deductions. The following are some of the exempt money for which deductions do not apply: tax returns, GST rebates, Family Allowance (UCCB, CCTB).

Clients must completely fill in each field including Band Name, Band Number, Signature and the full date (day, month, year). If this is not completed, the form is invalid and a cheque cannot be created.

Exemptions:

- Employable people can make up to \$200.00 per month before deductions start.
- Persons With Persistent Multiple Barriers can make up to \$500.00 per month before deductions start.
- Persons With Disability can earn up to \$800.00 per month before deductions start.
- If a client does not declare earnings and this is discovered a month later, the exemption is no longer allowed for those earnings and these earnings will have to be deducted dollar for dollar.
- Retroactive Child Tax Benefits – if a parent receives a lump sum payment for CCTB that they were entitled to receive but for some reason did not receive, this money is not exempt and may mean the family is not eligible for assistance.

Appeals

Applicants/recipients have the right to appeal by requesting an Administrative Review of a decision made by their Band Social Development Worker on the grounds of:

- Refusal to grant an allowance or service
- Reduction of an allowance or service
- Cancellation or suspension of an allowance or service

Where there is no discretion in the policy to make a decision, there is NO decision that is open to appeal.

The following are examples of some non-discretionary issues:

- General eligibility requirements such as requirements to complete an application and notify Social Development of the changes in circumstances
- The amount of assistance rates
- Rate change resulting from a policy change

How to Appeal:

When a client is informed of a decision, request the Administrative Review (appeal form) from their worker. Their worker will write the reasons for their decision on this and provide to the client.

The client can then set out the reasons why they believe the appeal should be granted. This can include new providing new information that is relevant to the original decision made by the BSDW. Clients have only 20 business days from when they are informed of the decision to have the form brought back to the Social Development office.

The form is then mailed to AANDC for their decision. Their decision will be made in writing within 20 business days.