



Saskatchewan
Ministry of
Social
Services

Saskatchewan Assistance Program Handbook

INFORMATION

Ministry Strategic Plan

The Ministry supports citizens at-risk as they work to build better lives for themselves through economic independence, strong families and strong community organizations. The Ministry assists these efforts through income support, child and family services, supports for persons with disabilities, efforts to develop affordable housing, and builds greater capacity in community-based organizations.

Saskatchewan Assistance Handbook

Legal information can be found in *The Saskatchewan Assistance Act* and *The Saskatchewan Assistance Regulations*. This handbook is not a legal description of the assistance program.

The Saskatchewan Assistance Act and Regulations are available from the Queen's Printer at a nominal cost.

The policy manual is available on the Saskatchewan Social Services web site at:

www.socialservices.gov.sk.ca/SAP-policy-manual.pdf

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Your Rights

The Saskatchewan Assistance Program provides assistance to those in need as a last resort.

You have the right to apply for social assistance.

You have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Financial assistance is not a loan. You will be given the money when you cannot meet your basic living expenses with your own resources and you are eligible for assistance.

You have the right to live your life, to make decisions and to accept the services offered. Some decisions you make may affect your eligibility for assistance but they are your choices.

You have the right to all monies and services allowed by law to meet your needs.

You have the right to appeal some decisions made by your worker.

You have the right to have your affairs handled with confidentiality.

You have the right to the protection of your personal information pursuant to *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and *The Health Information Protection Act*.

You have the right to access your file information.

Your Responsibilities

Give true and complete information when you apply.

Read your cheque stub or benefit deposit slip carefully. It shows details about your allowance. Your worker can also use it to give you important information about your benefits.

Report all changes in your situation to your worker while you are receiving assistance. (Example: getting work, moving to a different place, marriage, separation, new baby.)

Try all the ways you can to support yourself and your family. This includes applying for other benefits (example: federal child benefit, GST rebate).

Be involved in working out a plan that will help you to be as independent as possible. This may include:

- looking for work if you are able, or
- taking a job or training course, when offered.

Repay any overpayment of benefits you received.

Documents Needed to Support your Application

Please bring information to the interview about those items below that apply to you, your spouse and your dependant(s). These are needed to process your application for social assistance.

Requirement to Provide SIN and HSN

A Social Insurance number and Saskatchewan Health Services number are required for you/your spouse. If you cannot provide these numbers within 30 days one of the following is required:

- Driver's license (current)
- Any photo identification
- Band registry number
- Passport/immigration documents
- Birth or baptismal certificate

Assets

- Savings, personal chequing or business account numbers and statement showing current balance
- Certificate for registered savings plans, bonds, trust funds, annuities
- Documents/receipts for prepaid funeral
- Documents for notes receivable, mortgages receivable and agreements for sale
- Mortgage and title documents
- Registration certificates for cars, trucks and other vehicles
- Personal items valued at \$5000 or more (example: computer, tools, stereo equipment)

Income

- Cheque stubs or proof of income from all sources, such as maintenance payments, wages, pensions
- Information on your income and expenses if you are self-employed or a farmer

Needs

- Current or last month receipts for rent and utility bills
- Babysitting receipts
- Mortgage payment statement, property insurance documents, tax notice
- Any court orders or legal documents (divorce or separation documents, maintenance order).

Discuss your situation with your worker. Some needs are not provided under the Saskatchewan Assistance Program such as car insurance and over the counter drugs.

Applying for Assistance

- To apply for assistance, contact the Social Services Contact Centre. The phone number is 1-866-221-5200, in Regina 798-0660. The TTY numbers are 1-866-995-0099; in Regina, 787-1065.
- Tell the person with whom you are speaking if you have an emergency. If you are eligible, you may receive help for food and shelter if you do not have a place to live.
- You apply by completing an application form. Someone will help you. Do not sign this form until you are sure it is complete and true. This form is a legal document. When you sign the consent, you agree that your worker can check the information you provide. You also agree that the information on the application form may be shared with other government ministries or agencies to verify information.
- You and your spouse must sign the application for assistance. If this is not possible at your first interview, you should discuss this with your worker.

- Providing the information required for your application when you apply will help prevent delays.
- You will receive a letter telling you if your application is approved or turned down. Please keep this for your records.

Application Approved

If your application is approved you will receive assistance as long as you are eligible.

The amount depends on your family size, your needs and your income. Your worker will figure out the allowance for these needs, subtract your resources (the money you have) and then process your payment. This takes a few days.

Application Denied

You will receive a letter telling you your application is turned down. You will be told the reason for the denial based on a regulation or policy, and your right to appeal the decision. You may ask your worker to provide you a copy of the regulation or policy that forms the basis for the decision made. (See pages 17 to 20 for details).

Income

While you are on assistance:

- ALL money you receive must be reported to your worker.
- Income you receive during the month is used to figure out your next month's assistance.

- Some money is deducted in total from your financial assistance (example: support payments, Employment Insurance, pensions, training allowances).
- Some money is not deducted at all [example: all wages earned by children in school, GST rebates, Saskatchewan Employment Supplement (SES)].
- Some money is partly deducted (example: wages, income from roomers and boarders). The part that is not deducted is called an income exemption.

Maintenance/Child Support

You are expected to try to get support for your children. Your worker will discuss this with you. The Maintenance Enforcement Office at the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General collects maintenance payments when an Order or agreement is registered. You may be eligible for the Saskatchewan Employment Supplement. (See page 20.)

Income Exemptions

Work

You can still receive assistance if you work and do not earn enough to meet your basic needs. If you are able to work at least 36 hours a week, all of your wages will be deducted from your allowance for the first three months. Afterwards, some of your wages will not be deducted.

Your worker can explain this to you.

Farmers/Self-Employed

Farmers and self-employed clients can deduct some of their expenses from their income. They do not receive the earned income exemption.

Clients who have Roomers and/or Boarders

- 25% of room and board income received by the client, but not less than \$25 per month, is deducted.

Clients who rent out suites

- 40% of income, but not less than \$40 per month per suite is deducted.

Shared Living Arrangements

No income will be deducted for adults living with someone on social assistance when:

- the client receives the adult allowance
- two or more families are sharing a place
- older children from the family are in university, technical or vocation school

Assets

All the assets you had two years before you apply for assistance will be reviewed. Your worker will tell you how your assets affect the amount of money you get.

All assets must be reported. There are three types of assets:

- **Liquid Assets** - funds in bank accounts, R.S.P.s, bonds or investment certificates, etc.
- **Real Assets** are property such as a house or land
- **Personal Assets** are a car, truck, jewellery, etc.

Liquid Assets

You can keep a certain amount of your liquid assets at the time you apply (\$1,500 for one person, \$3,000 for two people in your family and \$500 for each additional family member). For instance, a family of two can have \$3,000 in liquid assets while a family of five can have \$4,500 in liquid assets.

Assets you can keep

You may keep some of your assets and still be eligible for assistance:

- your home if you are living in it;
- any personal property with a value of less than \$10,000 (example: TV, camera, stereo equipment);
- one vehicle.

Other Assets

- You may receive assistance for up to 90 days to give you time to sell other assets.
- You may ask for approval to keep your assets if you have exceptional reasons.

The Amount of Your Assistance

The amount of your assistance payment is the total of adding up your needs and deducting your financial resources. A deduction will be taken off your payment if you received an assistance advance or if you were overpaid.

Adult Allowance — is given for food, personal, travel, household and clothing needs. The amounts are set in the regulations by government.

Shelter Allowance — maximum limits are set for your rent/mortgage.

- The Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplement may be available to help with these costs.
- If your shelter cost is higher than the amount allowed, check with your worker. A higher amount may be given in some situations. (example: level entry for those with mobility problems)
- If you are buying your home, your mortgage payment and property insurance (85% of package policy) is included in your shelter allowance.
- Rent payments may be issued to you or by a joint payment cheque made payable to you and your landlord.
- Rather than paying a **security deposit**, the Ministry guarantees it to the landlord. The guarantee remains as long as you receive assistance and stay in your residence. The guaranteed amount is paid to the landlord if a claim is made through the Rentalsman or by written agreement between you and the landlord. If a payment is made to the landlord, the amount may be deducted from your future benefits.
- In some cases one-half the security deposit may be provided when you leave assistance. Please discuss this with your worker.

Utility Allowance — may be available to cover your costs for power, gas, fuel oil, water, sewer and basic telephone rental bills in your name. When you have to pay for laundry, a monthly allowance is provided.

- It will be easier to budget if you ask for equalized billing from your utility company.
- Your worker will need your utility statements in order to calculate your utility allowance.
- Talk to your worker if you have arrears.
- In some circumstances the ministry may make the monthly payment directly to SaskEnergy and SaskPower on your behalf.

- You are responsible for long distance charges and phone rental costs above the rental for one basic telephone. If you don't have a phone because of an outstanding bill, you may contact SaskTel about a toll restricted phone.

Board and Room Allowance — includes clothing and personal needs; maximum rates are set in the regulations by government.

Northern Food Allowance — because of higher food costs in northern Saskatchewan an additional \$50 per person per month is provided. Clients who live north of the 54th parallel and Barthel, Cumberland House and Pemmican Portage receive this allowance.

Advances — If you are receiving the adult allowance, you can request an advance for adult clothing and household needs. The advance amount is part of your allowance for future months. It will be taken off your monthly payment until the full amount is paid back.

If the advance will not cover the cost of your household or clothing needs, you may be eligible for extra money. (See Special Needs on the following page.)

Special Needs — extra money that you don't have to repay may be available in some situations. Please discuss your needs with your worker. Some examples are:

- clothing - other than day-to-day (example: maternity)
- travel - for other than day-to-day activities (example: for medical reasons, to attend a job interview)
- a special care allowance to help people with a disability buy services necessary to maintain a home (example: snow removal)
- travel needs for personal activities for persons with disabilities
- special telephone equipment for a person with a disability
- household items (a repayable advance is usually the first option)

- school allowance for children
- job and training start up costs (example: workboots, fees or permits)
- payment for home care services
- babysitting
- laundry costs due to a medical condition
- moving costs – with prior approval
- repairs to your home for health and safety reasons (does not include rented property)
- basic funeral expenses
- special allowance for children — may be available until the federal child benefit is paid
- visiting children allowance — may be available when children stay with the parent with access for more than 24 hours

Assistance Payments

Assistance is not paid in cash.

Unless exceptional circumstances exist, you are expected to have your benefits deposited electronically to your bank account. You are responsible for all bank charges and any overdrawn accounts. Exceptional circumstances include:

- You have a garnishee in place or garnishee proceedings have started. You must provide copy of the documentation of garnishee.
- You live in a remote area where there are no accessible bank services.
- You are unable to obtain a bank account. You will need to submit a copy of the refusal letter from the bank.

Payments are issued in advance for each month. If you started receiving assistance in the middle of the month, you will get a payment from that date to the end of the month. After that you will probably receive all your assistance near the end of the month for the next month. It is important to report your income before the end of the month.

You may choose to have part of your assistance issued in the middle of the month.

Overpayments and Repayment

An overpayment occurs when you received assistance for which you or your spouse were not eligible. Overpayments happen when you or your spouse do not report changes when they occur or the ministry does not make changes to your allowance in a timely manner.

All overpayments are debts owed to the government which must be collected. When you are on assistance a certain amount is taken off your monthly allowance. Even if you are not receiving benefits you are still expected to repay any overpayment. You will be contacted by the ministry's Accounts Receivable Unit to make payment arrangements you can afford.

If you do not make arrangements for repayment, overpayments may be collected from your income tax refund through an arrangement with Canada Revenue Agency.

You may contact Accounts Receivable Unit at:

Accounts Receivable Unit
1920 Broad Street, Regina, SK S4P 3V6
Telephone: 1-800-633-5326
in Regina: 787-3868

Health Services

When your application for assistance is approved by your worker you may be eligible for supplementary health coverage through the Ministry of Health. Call: 1-800-266-0695 (Regina: 787-3124) for enquiries about prescription drugs, dental and optical services, the hearing aid plan and other medical services. **Your worker cannot provide money for medical or health-related costs.**

If you have a disability and leave assistance to take a job, your health coverage will continue for one year. If you have high health costs after that, you may call the Contact Centre to see about further coverage.

Referral Services

Your worker can refer you to other people or agencies to help you be as independent as possible such as:

- Employment Insurance
- employment programs
- low-income housing
- addiction counselling
- budget counselling
- parenting skills
- Legal Aid
- Mental Health Services
- Canada Pension Plan

See pages 20-22 of this handbook for other programs. (When you are referred to by these agencies, you are expected to participate in the programs and services they offer.)

How to Contact Your Worker

Ask your worker how and when it is best to contact him or her.

- **By phone** — Workers have answering machines. Leave a short message giving your full name, phone number and why you are calling. Workers usually respond to their messages within 24 hours.
- If you don't have a phone or are away from home a lot during the day, please let your worker know how to reach you. If you cannot get through to your worker, ask to speak to someone else.

- **By mail** — Many things can be dealt with by writing to your worker using the mail. Make sure your name is on the note.
- Some offices have mailboxes in the waiting room. You can write a note or leave information in this mailbox.
- **By appointment** — If you want to make sure your worker is available it is best to make an appointment.

Complaints

If you have a complaint, talk with your worker. If you feel uneasy doing this or are not happy with the result, you can talk with your worker's supervisor. If you still have problems you can appeal.

Your Right to Appeal

You have the right to appeal if:

- your application for assistance was denied;
- you were not allowed to apply or reapply for assistance;
- your application was not processed within a reasonable time;
- your benefits were cancelled, changed or held;
- you feel the amount of assistance does not meet your basic needs; or,
- you are dissatisfied with unit policy.

Assistance During the Appeal Process

Assistance may be provided, if requested, until the appeal process is completed with some exceptions.

There are three steps in the appeal process:

- **Step One** — the unit administrator;
- **Step Two** — the regional appeal committee; and,
- **Step Three** — the Social Services Appeal Board.

The regional committee or the Social Services Appeal Board cannot change the rules under which assistance is determined. They can decide if the rules have been applied correctly.

Step One — Submit your appeal to the unit administrator.

- Submit your appeal *in writing within 30 days* from the date of the decision letter to the unit administrator at your nearest regional office listed on page 24 of this handbook.
- State the reason(s) for your appeal. Briefly explain the nature of the problem.
- The unit administrator will ask senior officials to review your case.
- If the issues can't be settled, arrangements will be made for a local appeal committee to hear your appeal. These arrangements will be made *within 30 days from the date your appeal was received* by the unit administrator.

Step Two — The Regional Appeal Committee

- Members of this committee are local citizens, they are not Ministry employees.
- You may have a person of your choice (an advocate) from your area help you present your appeal to the committee. At your request, a fee of \$45 may be provided for your advocate other than your spouse or dependent child. Expenses at set rates for

travel and meals may also be provided if required outside your community of residence. Payments are made to you or your trustee. Your worker may provide names and addresses of advocates in your area.

- You can bring information and documents to support your case. Your worker and other staff from the Ministry will be at the hearing to answer questions.
- The Ministry will give you a copy of their report three working days before the appeal. It will refer to the regulation or policy that applies to your situation.
- The regional appeal committee will hear your appeal ***within 30 days from the date your appeal is received***. You will receive a letter outlining the committee's decision.
- You or the Ministry may appeal the decision of the regional appeal committee to the Social Services Appeal Board

Step Three — The Social Services Appeal Board

- If you want to appeal to the Social Services Appeal Board, the unit administrator must receive your request ***in writing within 20 days*** of the date of the Regional Appeal Committee's letter.
- The Board will deal with your appeal ***within 30 days*** from the date your appeal is received by the unit administrator.
- Again, you can bring information and documents to support your appeal as well as someone (an advocate) to speak on your behalf.
- You will receive a letter outlining the Board's decision. This decision is final. It cannot be overturned by further appeals or by the Minister.

Costs Associated With Your Appeal

Social Services may provide funds at set rates for babysitting costs and travel outside your community of residence. Contact your worker about your expenses for travel and child care needs.

Other Ministry Programs in Social Services

Transitional Employment Allowance

The Transitional Employment Allowance (TEA) is an income support program for those participating in approved pre-employment programs and services or for those expecting other income in a short time.

For information on application and benefits call 1-866-221-5200; in Regina, 798-0660.

Saskatchewan Employment Supplement

The Saskatchewan Employment Supplement is a program to help parents with the child-related costs of going to work. The supplement is based on gross family income including all money earned from work, farming and self-employment as well as child/spousal maintenance payments.

For information on application and benefits call 1-877-696-7546; in Regina 787-4723.

Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplements

The Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplement is a program to help low-income tenant families and people with disabilities get accessible, quality and affordable housing.

For more information call 1-888-488-6385; in Regina, 787-4723.

Child Day Care Subsidy

Child care subsidies may be provided to low-income families who use a licensed family child care home or a licensed non-profit centre.

Your choice of a child care service should be based on your opinion of the caregiver and the environment. Involve your child. Your child's reaction and feelings are important.

For more information call 1-800-667-7155; in Regina, 787-4114.

Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability

The Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability Program (SAID) is a long-term income support for people with significant and enduring disabilities. The program was newly implemented in the fall of 2009.

For more information, call 1-888-567-SAID (7243); in Regina, 798-7243.

Other Government Ministry Programs

Ministry of Health

Family Health Benefits

This program provides low-income families with additional health benefits. For more information call the Ministry of Health at 1-800-266-0695; in Regina, 787-3126.

Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour

Career and Employment Services

Services to help people find work or upgrade their education are available at Can-Sask Career and Employment Services offices throughout the province.

Provincial Training Allowance

A monthly allowance may be provided for full and part-time students enrolled in adult basic education or related courses which are at least four weeks long. Allowances for living expenses are based on family size and whether or not you live with your parents.

Information about other financial and education programs such as student loans can be obtained by calling Saskatchewan Advanced Education, Employment and Labour at: 1-800-597-8278; in Regina, 787-5620.

Other Programs and Services

Your worker may refer you to other resources such as Employment Insurance, Legal Aid or Canada Pension Plan.

Contact Centre: 1-866-221-5200; in Regina, 798-0660
TTY: 1-866-995-0099; in Regina, 787-1065

Service Centres

Buffalo Narrows 1-800-667-7685
Peterson Avenue 235-1700
Box 220
S0M 0J0

Creighton 1-800-532-9580
1st Street East
Box 10
S0P 0A0

Estevan 637-4550
1219 5th Street
S4A 2V6

Fort Qu'Appelle 1-800-667-3260
177 Segwun Ave. S 332-3260
Box 1400
S0G 1S0

Kindersley 463-5470
125 - 1st Avenue East
Box 1658
S0L 1S0

LaLoche 1-877-371-1131
LaLoche Avenue 822-1711
Box 70
S0M 1G0

LaRonge 1-800-567-4066
1320 LaRonge Avenue 425-4544
Box 359
S0J 1L0

Lloydminster 1-877-367-7707
4815 - 50th Street 825-6410
S9V 0M8

Meadow Lake 1-877-368-8898
U.5, 101 Railway Pl. 236-7500
S9X 1X6

Melfort 1-800-487-8640
107 Crawford St. E. 752-6100
S0E 1A0

Moose Jaw 694-3647
36 Athabasca Street West
S6H 6V2

Nipawin 1-800-487-8594
210-1st Street East 862-1700
S0E 1E0

North Battleford 1-877-993-9911
405-1146 102nd St. 446-7535
S9A 1E9

Prince Albert 1-800-487-8603
800 Central Avenue 953-2345
S6V 6G1

Regina 787-3700
2045 Broad Street
S4P 3V7

Rosetown 882-5400
122 - 2nd Avenue West
Box 38
S0L 2V0

Saskatoon 1-877-884-1687
160 - 2nd Ave. South 933-5960
S7K 2H6

Swift Current 778-8219
350 Cheadle Street West
S9H 4G3

Weyburn 848-2404
110 Souris Avenue N.E.
S4H 2Z9

Yorkton 786-1300
72 Smith Street East
S3N 2Y4



All offices are wheelchair accessible with the exception of the Fort Qu'Appelle and Nipawin offices.

