



Community Services,
Seniors and Labour

CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

Policy Manual

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POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Index	0.0
Effective: January 7, 2011		Authorized by: Deputy Minister <i>Shawn Connor</i>	Page 1 of 1

1.0 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- 1.1 Program Objectives and Description
- 1.2 Legislation Authority
- 1.3 Delegated Authority

2.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 Role of Child Care Subsidy Caseworker
- 2.2 Responsibilities of Applicant
- 2.3 Responsibilities of Child Care Centre

3.0 APPLICATION FOR CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

- 3.1 Parents Under the Age of 18
- 3.2 Cohabitation
- 3.3 Children of Immigrant Families
- 3.4 Application Process
- 3.5 Determination of Eligibility
 - 3.5.1 Social Assessment
 - 3.5.2 Financial Assessment
- 3.6 Income
 - 3.6.1 Back Pay/Windfalls
 - 3.6.2 Student Loans
 - 3.6.3 Other Child Care Financial Resources
- 3.7 Income Exemptions

4.0 OVERPAYMENTS

5.0 REVIEWS

6.0 AUDITS

POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Overview	1.0
Effective: January 7, 2011	Authorized by: Deputy Minister <i>Sharon Cameron</i>		Page 1 of 2

1.0 OVERVIEW

1.1 Programs Objectives and Description

**Please note that parent/guardian/family is used interchangeably throughout this document.*

1. The Child Care Subsidy Program (hereinafter referred to as “CCSP”) is a provincial program designed to assist Island parents/guardians with the cost of child care services at Licensed Early Years Centres, Infant Homes and Private Licensed Centres (hereinafter collectively referred to as “Child Care Centres”).
2. The CCSP is delivered through the Department of Community Services, Seniors and Labour (hereinafter referred to as the “Department”) in partnership with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
3. The objective of the CCSP is to assist eligible families with their child care expenses to enable them to work, pursue employment, attend school/training programs, respond to family medical needs or provide for their children who have special developmental needs. Eligibility for the CCSP is established by means of an application process which assesses parents/guardians’ social and financial needs (see Sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2). With respect to social needs, eligible families include those with employed parents, parents attending school (if the funds for childcare program expenses are not available through the training program), families with children in need of protection, medical needs of parents, and families whose children have special needs. Financial need is determined by a Sliding Scale Income Test which considers family size and net monthly income.
4. The steps involved in the subsidy process include:
 - Application process: With the assistance of the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker, an applicant completes a Subsidy Program application form and provides the necessary documentation to assist with the assessment.
 - Determination of eligibility: The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker determines eligibility for subsidy based on the financial and social needs criteria of the program.
 - Eligibility review: The outcome and decision regarding the family’s determination of eligibility can be reviewed if an applicant believes their circumstances have been inaccurately accessed and/ or upon a change of circumstance. This is usually

POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Overview	1.0
Effective: January 7, 2011	Authorized by: Deputy Minister <i>Shawn Cameron</i>		Page 2 of 2

- conducted by a Child Care Subsidy Caseworker in consultation with their Supervisor.
 - **Contract:** Parents, centres and the Department all sign a contract for the service.
 - **Choice of Centre:** When a family is approved for child care subsidy, parents are free to choose whichever Child Care Centre they wish. The Early Childhood Development Association provides *A Parent's Guide to Choosing Quality Child Care* that can be made available to the parent at the time of application.
 - **Claims process:** Once subsidy is approved, the Child Care Centre is paid the subsidy on behalf of the client. The centre submits a monthly claim request to the Department based on the attendance of the child at the centre and/or the amount that is approved in the signed contract.
 - **Payment process:** Payments are made to the centres based on the subsidy claims.
 - **Annual reviews:** Eligibility for child care subsidy will be re-evaluated at a minimum of every 12 months or as designated by the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker.
5. Information obtained by the Department staff while providing services is confidential and may be shared only with other government departments, private agencies, or other persons when necessary and as set out in the *Social Assistance Act*, Section 6 and the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, Section 31(c).

1.2 Legislative Authority

1. The authority for the CCSP is contained in the *Social Assistance Act*, Chapter S-4.3, Section 1 (j) and under the *Social Assistance Act Regulations* (1.3(c)) and (20.1).

1.3 Delegated Authority

1. *The Social Assistance Act*, Chapter S-4.3 empowers the Minister to provide social services and makes provision for a "Director of Social Assistance" to have specific authority and accompanying responsibilities with respect to the administration of the Act.
 - (a) The Director shall establish administrative procedures, controls, safeguards and written policies for the more effective and efficient administration of this Act and the Regulations (see Section 4.4(5) of the Act).
 - (b) All employees of the Department and all applicants for the CCSP are bound by the administrative policies and procedures as if administrative procedures, controls, safeguards or written policies were specified in the Regulations (see Section 4.4(6) of the Act).

POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Roles and Responsibilities	2.0
Effective: January 7, 2011		Authorized by: Deputy Minister <i>Sharon Cameron</i>	Page 1 of 3

2.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Role of Child Care Subsidy Caseworker

1. Staff play a significant role in assisting families with the application and eligibility process. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker interprets policy and must clearly communicate these policies to families and child care centres in a timely manner.
2. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker communicates with Child Care Centres, regarding specific clients and general policies and procedures regarding the CCSP.
3. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will work with the applicant to ensure that the application process is understood and that there is a clear understanding of the documentation required for verification of eligibility.
4. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will inform the applicant that once the application forms are completed, printed and signed that all information will be kept on file and may be shared with other Government Departments, private agencies or other persons when necessary and as set out in the *Social Assistance Act, Section 6* or the *Freedom of Information and Privacy of Protection Act, Section 31.c*.
5. If the client has any questions about the storage of their information they may contact their Child Care Subsidy Caseworker.
6. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker reviews the application and documentation to determine the family's eligibility for child care subsidy.
7. If the application is approved, the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will advise the applicant/parent with the details of the funding.
8. If the application is denied, the reason for denial will be provided to the applicant in writing.
9. In the event of a denial of subsidy it is also the responsibility of the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker to inform the applicant of their right to request a review of their application (see Review Process).

2.2 Responsibilities of Applicant

1. It is the applicant/parent's responsibility to make an application to the CCSP and they may do so at any time.

POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Roles and Responsibilities	2.0
Effective: January 7, 2011		Authorized by: Deputy Minister <i>Sharon Connor</i>	Page 2 of 3

2. It is the applicant's responsibility to supply the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker with all the necessary documentation to accurately assess their eligibility for child care subsidy. This includes formal statements disclosing their present income and providing evidence in support of their application.
3. Applicants are responsible for advising the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker of any changes in their social or financial circumstances. *The Social Assistance Act, Chapter S -4.3* requires every person in receipt of income services to notify the Department of any change in circumstances that differ from those previously reported. Failure to notify the Department/Worker of these changes may result in cancellation of the subsidy, recovery of any overpayment as determined by the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker in consultation with the Overpayment Coordinator, and/or criminal and/or civil legal action.
4. Applicants are responsible for abiding by the policies of the Child Care Centre, including giving notice to the centre if the child is being removed for any reason. Failure to provide appropriate notice may result in non-payment of subsidy by the Department.
5. Applicants agree to the terms outlined in the Agreement for the number of days approved, the amount of the parent's share of the fees if applicable, and the amount of subsidy the Department will pay.

2.3 Responsibilities of Child Care Centre

1. The Child Care Centre should familiarize itself with procedural information regarding the CCSP. The Child Care Centre should establish clear lines of communication with Child Care Subsidy Caseworkers assigned to their child care centre. Such communication would include any questions regarding the CCSP with respect to subsidy, waiting lists, applications, surcharges and claims. Effective communication will assist in avoiding delays in the processing of subsidy applications and claims.
2. The Child Care Centre is responsible to ensure that the Department has up-to-date copies of their parent policies.
3. The Child Care Centre shall also provide a copy of the centre's policies to the parent.
4. The Child Care Centre will abide by the terms of the Agreement between the Department, the Joint Applicants and the Child Care Centre.
5. Child Care Centres are required to report to the Childcare Subsidy Caseworker any absences

POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Roles and Responsibilities	2.0
Effective: January 7, 2011		Authorized by: Deputy Minister <i>Sham Conner</i>	Page 3 of 3

of children for more than 3 consecutive days in any pay period.

6. The supervisor/owner will bill the Department on the Child Care Attendance and Billing Record, on a monthly basis, for the per diem rates contained in the Agreement between the Department, the Joint Applicants and the Child Care Centre.
7. Registration and administration fees and deposits are the responsibility of the parents and are not covered by the CCSP.
8. The Department will not pay fees charged by a Child Care Centre because of parents picking up children late or because of the Department's practise of paying in arrears.
9. The Department may pay up to a maximum of 2 weeks fees on termination of space if the termination is given to the Child Care Centre by the Department.
10. From time to time, it may happen that a Child Care Centre will come under review of the Early Childhood Facilities Board because of violation of early childhood regulations. In these circumstances, subsidy may be withdrawn on behalf of children attending that particular centre. However, fees may be paid for that child to attend another centre. The decision to withdraw subsidy to a Child Care Centre is to be made only after consultation with the Minister of Community Services, Seniors and Labour.

POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Application for Child Care Subsidy	3.0
Effective: January 7, 2011		Authorized by: Deputy Minister <i>Shawn Cameron</i>	Page 1 of 6

3.0 APPLICATION FOR CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

3.1. Parents Under the Age of 18

1. Regardless of age, the Department recognizes the right of all parents to make decisions for themselves and their children.
2. Parents under the age of 18 have a need to work toward financial independence by working on employment related goals such as completing basic education, job readiness training, post-secondary education or work experience programs. As such, quality child care arrangements are essential for young parents to work toward independence.
3. Where a parent(s) is under the age of 18 and living with parents, child care subsidy may only be provided while the young parent remains in school and the student may apply for subsidy in their own right. Christmas break and March break will be considered as part of their school year as will summer break if the young parent intends to return to school the following September.
4. Where a parent(s) is under the age of 18 and is living apart from their parents, they may apply for child care subsidy in their own right.

3.2 Cohabitation

1. Spouse is defined as persons not legally married but living together as a couple, therefore; being recognized as cohabiting.
2. Persons living together as spouses shall make joint application for child care subsidy, including income of both partners, regardless of the length or stability of the relationship.

3.3 Children of Immigrant Families

1. Immigrant families are defined, for purposes of the CCSP, as families that come to this province from a country outside Canada and are not sponsored by the federal government.

POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Application for Child Care Subsidy	3.0
Effective: January 7, 2011		Authorized by: Deputy Minister <i>Shawn Conroy</i>	Page 2 of 6

2. Families participating in English/French Alternative Language programs are eligible to apply for CCSP. Parents are to be attending on a regular basis or on a wait list for the next available seat.
3. Funding will be provided, if the parent meets program eligibility criteria.

3.4 Application Process

1. All applications for Child Care Subsidy are to be made through the Department by completing a Child Care Subsidy Application.
2. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker shall read the joint agreement to the applicant. It is important the applicant gives accurate information.
3. It is necessary to verify information about income. The onus is on the applicant to provide the proper documentation in order to support income claims.
4. The Child Care Subsidy Application must be signed by both parents/guardians, except where extenuating circumstances prevent the obtaining of the second signature.
5. Upon approval of Child Care Subsidy, the applicant is informed in writing of the Agreement between the Department, the Applicant and the Child Care Centre of the amount of the subsidy to be paid.
6. Three copies of the Agreement will be sent to the Child Care Centre to be signed by both the parent/guardian and the Child Care Centre. The supervisor of the Child Care Centre will have the parent/guardian sign the document and return the signed copy to the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker.
7. By signing the Agreement, applicants agree to the terms outlined in the Agreement for the number of days approved, the parent share if applicable, the amount of subsidy the Department will pay, and the terms and conditions of the Child Care Centre.

POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Application for Child Care Subsidy	3.0
Effective: January 7, 2011		Authorized by: Deputy Minister <i>Sharon Cameron</i>	Page 3 of 6

3.5 Determination of Eligibility

In order to be eligible for Child Care Subsidy, the applicant must:

1. Meet social needs eligibility requirements;
2. Meet financial needs requirements; and
3. Provide and complete all required documentation to substantiate need.

3.5.1 Social Assessment

1. In determining the social needs, social consideration is given to the needs of the child and the family. The need for child care subsidy can be established by any one or a combination of the following:
 - (a) parents who are working;
 - (b) parents who are attending training programs;
 - (b) medical needs of parents;
 - (c) diagnosed special needs of children; and
 - (d) children in need of protection.

3.5.2 Financial Assessment

1. If a family is found eligible on the basis of social needs, an income test, consisting of a review of liquid assets and financial eligibility, is completed by the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker.
2. Subsidy is provided on a user pay basis. This means that families are expected to contribute to the cost of the service according to their means. A Sliding Scale Income Test will be applied to each case to determine the amount of payment if any to be made by the parent.
3. In calculation of benefits, staff shall ensure that applicants have filled out the Child Care Subsidy Application and meet the social eligibility criteria under section 3.5.1.
4. Eligibility shall then be determined by taking the applicants' gross monthly income, deducting the Federal Government standard employee deductions (ie. CPP, EI and Federal income tax) and applying any wage exemptions (see 3.7 (2)) (collectively referred to as "Net Income").

POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Application for Child Care Subsidy	3.0
Effective: January 7, 2011		Authorized by: Deputy Minister <i>Shawn Cameron</i>	Page 4 of 6

5. This Net Income amount is then compared to a Government of PEI determined eligible income range. This range consists of 1) The turning point or the income level up to which full subsidy is available and 2) the breakeven point, the income level at which all subsidy ceases.
6. Partial subsidy is available on a sliding scale based on income, up to the breakeven point.
7. The value of the turning point and breakeven point varies depending on family size. Please see Appendix "A" for turning point values.
8. The calculation for eligibility may indicate the applicant is eligible for full or partial subsidy. If the applicant is eligible for partial subsidy, the applicant is responsible to pay the remaining balance of the total child care cost.
9. Maximum per diem rates are established by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to be paid according to the following:

Child Care Centres (full day programs)	Per Diem Rates
Infants (birth - 2 years)	\$32
2 year olds	\$26
3 – 4 year olds	\$25
School Age Child Care (up to the age of 12)	
Full day rate (storm days, school holidays, professional development days, etc.)	\$18
Before and After School	\$11

10. Full day is based on 4 hours or more with lunch provided. A child attending a Child Care Centre for less than 4 hours will have half-day status.
11. The Department will pay the per diem rate established by the Child Care Centre up to the maximum allowed under section 3.5.2 (9), less any fee paid by the parent or other organization. Any exceptions are to be in accordance with the policy.
12. The actual daily rate of a Child Care Centre will be paid for a "child in care" e.g. in cases of relative/kinship placement by the Director of Child Protection.

POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Application for Child Care Subsidy	3.0
Effective: January 7, 2011		Authorized by: Deputy Minister <i>Shaw Connor</i>	Page 5 of 6

13. For those parents receiving social assistance, no parent share will apply. However, any costs above our maximum daily rates will be the responsibility of those parents.

14. Only programs licensed under the *Child Care Facilities Act, R.S.P.E.I., Cap.C-5* are eligible to enroll children financially supported by the CCSP.

3.6 Income

- 1.
2. The CCSP will include as family income:
 - (a) Total income as defined by the *Income Tax Act, R.S.P.E.I., Cap. I-1*. This includes employment income, commissions, pensions, disability benefits, EI, CPP or OAS Benefits, taxable dividends from Canadian Corporations, interest and investment income, net partnership income, taxable capital gains, rental income, child support, alimony, RRSP income, self-employment income, Worker's Compensation benefits, net federal supplements and any other income received by the family;
 - (b) Training or education allowances; and
 - (c) Income granted for living costs under a Government Student Loan Program (see section 3.6.2).

3.6.1 Back Pay/Windfalls

1. Back pay/windfalls will be considered as income in the month the applicant receives the monies. Depending on the amount of Back pay/windfall this would either increase the parent share or disallow the applicant completely, for this month only.
2. Any monies invested up to a maximum of \$100,000 per applicant/family would not be considered an asset (see section 3.7 (1)(e)) and thus would not be considered as income under the CCSP. Interest income from this investment would be considered income (see section 3.6 (1)(a)).

3.6.2 Student Loans

1. Applicants who are students at a post-secondary institution will have their financial needs assessed using the maximum student loan amount available to them prior to becoming eligible to apply for the CCSP.
2. Information on the maximum amount of loan available to the applicant and what

POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Application for Child Care Subsidy	3.0
Effective: January 7, 2011		Authorized by: Deputy Minister <i>Sharon Cameron</i>	Page 6 of 6

expenditures the loan covers will need to be provided to the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker prior to subsidy being awarded.

3.6.3 Other Child Care Financial Resources

The application and ongoing eligibility will take into consideration funds available to the applicant for child care supports that may be available under the Labour Market Development Agreement and the Labour Market Agreement which are administered by the Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

3.7 Income Exemptions

1. The CCSP will exempt as family income:

- a) the full amount of the Canada Child Tax Benefit; which includes both the Child Tax Benefit and the National Child Benefit Supplement components;
 - b) the full amount of the Universal Child Care Benefit;
 - c) Registered Disability Savings Plan and Workers Income Tax Benefit;
 - d) only involuntary deductions from wages, e.g. Canada Pension Plan, Employment Insurance, Income Tax, Union/Professional Dues; Company Pension Plan;
 - e) Registered Pension Plans/Registered Retirement Savings Plans/medical plan deductions; and
 - f) assets (e.g. property, savings, shares, investments, trust funds, etc.) up to a maximum of \$100,000.
2. For families currently participating in the workforce, a wage exemption of 100% of the first \$125.00 per month earned plus 10% of the balance of net earned income will be applied.
3. Where a portion of the family income is from training or education allowances, the amount paid by the student for educational costs will be excluded as income. Educational costs will usually mean tuition, books, student/education fees and travel.

POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Overpayments	4.0
Effective: January 7, 2011	Authorized by:	<i>Shawn Cameron</i>	Page 1 of 2
	Deputy Minister		

4.0 OVERPAYMENTS

1. Overpayment refers to any monies paid that ought not to have been paid.
2. All overpayments shall be documented by the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker and sent to the Overpayment Coordinator as per the *Social Assistance Act*, Regulations, Section 28 (5).
3. An attempt shall be made to recover all overpayments regardless of whether or not the person continues to receive child care subsidy.
4. Overpayment recoveries from persons continuing to receive child care subsidy may be negotiated as follows:
 - (a) repayment in a lump sum;
 - (b) a reasonable increase in their parent share;
 - (c) termination of child care subsidy for the period of time necessary to be equivalent of their overpayment; or
 - (d) some combination of the above.
5. Overpayment recoveries from persons no longer eligible to receive child care subsidy may be negotiated as follows:
 - (a) repayment in a lump sum;
 - (b) monthly payments of a reasonable amount, given the circumstances of the person and the size of the overpayment; or
 - (c) some combination of the above.
6. Calculation of Increase in Parent Share/Recovery Rates:
 - (a) Recovery rate should be 5%-10% of the overpayment amount.
 - (b) Minimum rate of \$25 to a maximum of \$100 with discretion given to Overpayment Coordinator to adjust based on consultation with worker and considering the clients circumstances.
 - (c) Amounts are added to parent share amount until overpayment is fully recovered or service is terminated, whichever comes first.

POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Overpayments	4.0
Effective: January 7, 2011		Authorized by: <i>Shawn Connor</i> Deputy Minister	Page 2 of 2

Overpayment Amount	Withhold Recovery Rate
\$.01 - \$24.00	One time deduction of full amount
\$25 - \$250	\$25.00 or one time deduction of full amount
\$251 - \$500	\$25.00 - \$50.00
\$501 - \$750	\$50.00 - \$75.00
\$751 - \$1,000 +	\$75.00 - \$100.00

7. An initial recovery letter will be sent to client outlining the overpayment occurrence, reason for overpayment and request that contact be made to the CCSP office.
8. Where initial recovery has been non-productive, the overpayment will be referred to the Overpayment Coordinator for further collection efforts.

POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Reviews	5.0
Effective: January 7, 2011		Authorized by: Deputy Minister <i>Sharon Cameron</i>	Page 1 of 2

5.0 REVIEWS

1. Where an applicant is dissatisfied with a decision made by the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker with respect to eligibility, subsidy approved, decrease in subsidy, or suspension or cancellation of subsidy, the applicant may request that decision be reviewed.
2. The formal review process should not negate the role of the supervisor to ensure staff is making decisions consistent with regulations, policy and good judgment. As such, the worker will review the file with their Supervisor to determine if the appropriate decision has been made with respect to subsidy eligibility.
3. If the client is still dissatisfied with the outcome of this review, a request must be made within 30 days of the decision being disputed and must be submitted, in writing, to the Early Childhood Programs Administrator, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2nd Floor Jones Building, P.O. Box 2000, Charlottetown, PE C1A 7N8.
4. A review may be withdrawn at any stage by the applicant requesting the review.
5. The Early Childhood Programs Administrator, or designate shall convene a Provincial Review Committee (the "Review Committee") which shall be comprised of the Early Childhood Programs Administrator or designate, a Supervisor and a Child Care Subsidy Caseworker, the latter two being from offices other than the office from which the review request originated.
6. The purpose of the CCSP Review Process is to examine the actions taken by the Department, and make a finding regarding adherence to the CCSP policy and work processes.
7. A hearing will be scheduled within 15 days of the Early Childhood Programs Administrator receiving the review request.
8. A Notice of Review Hearing will be forwarded to the participant (appellant) by registered mail and/or hand delivered and the Department (respondent) by regular mail to advise them of the date, time and place of the hearing.
9. Both the participant (appellant) and CCSP staff representatives from the office (respondent) where the review originated will have an opportunity to address the Review Committee.

POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Reviews	5.0
Effective: January 7, 2011	Authorized by:	<i>Shawn Connor</i>	Page 2 of 2
	Deputy Minister		

10. Notification of the decision of the Review Committee is forwarded to the participant (appellant) by registered mail and to the Department office (respondent) by regular mail within 15 days of the completion of the hearing.

11. The original decision of the Department remains in effect unless or until the Review Committee determines otherwise. In the event the review decision is in the favor of the participant then he or she will be reimbursed retroactively by the Department. The decision of the Review Committee is final and binding for both parties (appellant and respondent).

POLICY	Section	Social Programs	7
	Program	Child Care Subsidy	
	Instruction	Audits	6.0
Effective: January 7, 2011	Authorized by:	<i>Shawn Cameron</i>	Page 1 of 1
	Deputy Minister		

6.0 AUDITS

1. Audits may be conducted according to the *Social Assistance Act*, Regulations 5(4) and 5(6).
2. Case audits may be conducted both randomly and requested and shall include:
 - (a) Administrative Case Audit – to check for required documentation, completion of appropriate forms and content quality; and
 - (b) Financial Case Audit – to verify the application information, to confirm that eligibility was established in accordance with policy, to ensure that the appropriate subsidy was awarded.
2. Case Audit Reports shall indicate the findings of the audit plus any related corrective recommendations.

Turning Points

Number of persons in Family Group	Turning Point Net Monthly Amount
2	\$1,453.34
3	\$1,713.34
4	\$1,933.34
5	\$2,093.34
6	\$2,273.34
7	\$2,393.34
8	\$2,493.34
9	\$2,593.34
10	\$2,693.34