

## Chapter 9: Special Needs Benefits

### (vi) Furniture and Appliances

<b>Intent:</b>	To clarify the benefits that can be provided to assist recipients to purchase household furniture and appliances.
<b>Act:</b> (if applicable)	N/A
<b>Regulations:</b>	<p>Special needs -furniture</p> <p>21. (1) An applicant or recipient may, at the discretion of an officer, be eligible for special needs assistance for the following items of furniture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) for electric stoves, up to \$300;</li> <li>(b) for refrigerators for applicants or recipients with dependents, up to \$400;</li> <li>(c) for washers, for applicants or recipients with dependents, up to \$350;</li> <li>(d) for beds, for the dependents of applicants or recipients only <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) up to \$125 towards the cost of the mattress,</li> <li>(ii) up to \$75 towards the cost of a box spring, or</li> <li>(iii) up to \$200 for a bed;</li> </ul> </li> <li>(e) for a crib or for a crib mattress or for both, up to \$100.</li> </ul> <p>(2) All amounts referred to in this section include HST.</p>
<b>Overview:</b> (if applicable)	N/A
<b>Policy:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requests for household furniture and appliances will be carefully evaluated, taking into consideration the length of time the recipient has been in receipt of Income Support benefits, other available resources, current accommodations, etc.</li> <li>• The Department will only provide a contribution towards the cost of furniture and appliances identified in the regulations, and will not fund the full cost of these items.</li> </ul>

- Receipts for furniture/appliances will no longer be required. The rates paid for these items are merely a contribution toward the cost of the item with an expectation that these items will last for at least 10 years. Subsequent requests for the same item will not be approved until a 10 year period had passed.
  - Assistance to purchase household furniture and appliances is normally only provided to recipients eligible for basic Income Support.
    - Recipients who are victims of a non-declared disaster (fire, flood, etc.) and who carry insurance, only the deductible portion of the claim will be considered, up to the maximum contribution amount provided by the Department.
  - **Recipients who are Victims of Violence may be eligible for a “start-up allowance”** to purchase the items necessary to set up a new home (please refer to policy on [Victims of Violence](#)).
  - Requests for eligible household furniture and appliances **cannot be considered:**
    - from recipients who have not been in receipt of Income Support for twenty-four consecutive months, except for
      - recipients who had been in receipt of Income Support for twenty-four months or more and leave Income Support for short term employment (less than 3 months) at a low wage and return to Income Support;
    - from persons in the family home not included in the recipient's Income Support benefits, i.e. boarders or family members over 18 years old;
    - from recipients boarding with relatives/non-relatives;
    - from recipients in "Rent to Own" Agreements where the furniture in the home belong to the landlord/landlady;
    - for items of furniture less than \$50;
    - from recipients to cover the cost of warranties on appliances; and/or
    - from recipients who have sold, given away, discarded or otherwise disposed of their existing item(s) of furniture and are requesting a replacement.
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- Assistance to purchase furniture and appliances may be provided to non-recipients in the following exceptional circumstances:
  - to victims of a non-declared disaster (fire, flood, etc.) with no insurance or other resources;
    - Recipients should be aware in these situations the Red Cross may also respond by providing support. Recipients can contact the Red Cross through their toll free number @ 1-800-222-9597
  - to victims of violence leaving abusive situations; and/or
  - in instances of extreme hardship.

#### **Eligible Items of Furniture and Appliances**

- The replacement of washers, refrigerators and electric stoves will be considered only when the cost of repairing is greater than the maximum contribution amount. Repairs under \$50 in a given month are the recipient's responsibility.
- All contributions are HST included.

#### **(a) Electric Stoves (24" or 30" width)**

- They are not to be provided to recipients in rental accommodations.
- The maximum contribution is \$300.

#### **(b) Refrigerators - only provided to recipients with dependent children**

- They are not to be provided to recipients in rental accommodations.
- The maximum contribution is \$400.

#### **(c) Washers - only provided to recipients with dependent children**

- If there are no reasonable alternatives such as apartment laundry facilities or a local laundromat within a 15 km. return trip from the recipient's residence, approval can be given.
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- Funds can be provided if it is not reasonable to expect current arrangements to continue.
- The maximum contribution \$350.

**(d) Beds**

- They are provided for children only.
- They are provided once in a 10 year period.
- Bunk beds may be substituted for two single beds when necessary due to space limitations.
- The maximum contribution for a mattress is \$125, and a box spring \$75.

**(e) Crib and/or Crib Mattress**

- A contribution toward the purchase of a crib can only be provided in **exceptional circumstances** when recipients can clearly demonstrate that they cannot make alternate arrangements to secure a crib either through purchasing or borrowing a new/used crib and/or mattress.
- If a crib was provided by the Department, a replacement **cannot** be provided.
- Recipients are responsible for ensuring that the crib they acquire meets current CSA standards.
- The maximum contribution is \$100.

**Note:** Persons in receipt of the [Mother Baby Nutrition Supplement](#) receive an additional \$90 plus the regular monthly amount of \$60 on the month the child is born, which may be a resource for the family.

**(f) Repairs to Existing Appliances**

- Where cost effective, eligible items should be repaired as opposed to replaced. Items such as fuses, lights and minor repairs up to \$50 per month are the recipient's responsibility.
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Repairs over \$50 but less than 50% of the contribution cost identified in the Regulations can be approved by a Client Service Officer. Repairs over 50% of the contribution cost can be approved by a Client Service Manager.

- Where the CSO is uncertain as to the operating condition of an item or whether it can be repaired, the recipient will be required to have the item inspected by a certified repair person.

#### **(g) Exceptional Situations**

- In very exceptional circumstances, household furniture and appliances may be provided outside the above policies. Examples that may be considered are:
  - a single recipient requesting a washer who has health issues requiring frequent changing of linens (medical documentation required);
  - exceptions to the 10 year timeframe where the rationale is clearly identified
  - the issuance of a washer when the laundromat is within 15 km if there is medical documentation
  - a clothes dryer (in very extenuating circumstances) to meet an emergency medical condition (medical documentation required);
  - an adult recipient whose state of health is impacted by using their current bed (medical documentation required) and/or;
  - a recipient requiring an orthopedic mattress as a result of a health condition (specialists verification required). A manager may also consider a note from another health care professional assuming it is a part of the medical care that a specialist is providing (for example, a letter from the cancer clinic).
  - **The Department of Health and Community Service's Special Assistance Program should be contacted in these cases to determine client eligibility through this program.**
  - The maximum contribution for a mattress is only up to \$325.00 (H.S.T. included).

#### **(h) Items Not Provided**

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- Insurance premiums on household contents
- Other furniture/appliances such as:
  - range hoods
  - air exchangers
  - sofas, table and chair sets
  - bedding
  - bedroom dressers
  - night tables
  - high chairs
  - car seats etc.

**Procedure:** Client Services Officer must:

- Advise recipients that the Department only provides a contribution towards the cost of a specific item, up to the maximum as outlined in the regulations;
- Advise the recipient of the Department's policy regarding cribs;
- Review the official record to ensure the item was not previously provided within a reasonable period of time (i.e. less than ten years for furniture and appliances)
- Not provide a stove/refrigerator to recipients who are renting;
- Verify that the recipients does not have an insurance policy in cases of fire or other emergencies before a replacement is approved; and
- Record all requests and approvals in the official record and provide a cheque to the recipient or a Service Authorization to the vendor; ensuring that it does not exceed the maximums as defined in policy.

**Authority Level:** Client Services Officers can approve:

- Up to \$1000 per request for beds and/or mattresses (items must not be split into separate requests to avoid exceeding the authority level); and

- Repair costs which exceed \$50 but that do not exceed 50% of the contribution cost as prescribed in the Regulations (i.e. up to \$150 for repairs to an electric stove).

**Client Services Managers/Regional Managers can approve:**

- Up to \$2,500 for individual requests
  - electric stoves (24" or 30" width)
  - refrigerators
  - washers
  - cribs and/or crib mattresses
  - requests made under exceptional situations
  - clothes dryers; and/or
  - repairs that exceed 50% of the contribution costs as defined in the Regulations (i.e. repairs that exceed \$150 for a stove, or \$200 for a refrigerator)

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