

Chapter 9: Special Needs Benefits

(xi) Other Special Needs

Intent:	To clarify when additional items of special needs can be provided through the Income Support Program, to support the well-being of an applicant or recipient.
Act: (if applicable)	N/A
Regulations:	19. (1) Other monthly income support for which an applicant or recipient may be eligible is: (l) for items of special need, an amount determined by the minister.
Overview: (if applicable)	N/A
Policy:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Items of special needs cannot be used to increase the rates for basic benefits identified in the Income Support Regulations such as individual/family benefits. • The following are a few of the standard items which may be included as “Items of Other Special Needs” for applicants/recipients of Income Support. • Authority levels for approval are noted below in the Authority Level section. Some may be approved at a Client Services Officer (CSO) level; however, others such as septic tank cleaning, must be approved by a Client Services Manager (CSM). Requirements over \$2500 must be approved by the Regional Director. <p>Cleaning Septic Tanks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recipients who are home owners and are having trouble with their septic tanks must obtain three quotes (where available) and payments can be made under the category ‘septic tank cleaning’. <p>Paternity Testing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In situations where parties agree to paternity testing outside the court process, the Department can pay up to 50% of the total cost. However, should there be more than one potential father, then the Department may pay for two thirds of the cost (mother’s and child’s portion), while each potential father would pay their share. It should be noted that the mother’s and child’s cost would be a one time payment. Payment for this

testing should only be made to accredited DNA laboratories.

- If paternity testing and costs are ordered by a court order, the Department can cover the amount that the Income Support client is ordered to pay.
- Should the court give leave for paternity testing without addressing the issue of cost, the Department can pay up to a maximum of 50% of the total cost.
- There is no provision to pay paternity testing for cases where there is no potential for child support or a person was already declared the father in a previous child support order. However, departmental social workers may be able to assist individuals with the process of obtaining paternity testing with the cost being paid by the individuals involved.

Extermination and Fumigation Services

- Recipients, **who are homeowners**, with an infestation of insects/rodents/bedbugs, may request assistance to cover the cost of extermination and fumigation services. Recipients who are renting should be referred to their landlord/landlady.
- In the case of bedbugs, fumigation can be covered for clients who are renting where the landlord/landlady has refused to fumigate the rental unit. Clients should be instructed to obtain three quotes (this may not be possible in all areas due to geographical size), and assuming all quotes cover the same service, the cheaper one will be approved.
- Prior approval is required before the recipient engages a pest control service.
- The recipient may pay the fee charged by the professional pest control company and receive reimbursement from the Department, or request approval as a Service Authorization and the invoice forwarded to the Department for payment.

Summer School Registration Fees/Transportation and Supplementary Examinations

- Summer School registration fees may be paid for a dependent child/student of a recipient.

- Confirmation from the school is required, indicating the completion of a specific course(s) in summer school is necessary for promotion to a higher grade level in the next school year or to graduate.
- For students in Levels 1, 2 and 3 only, a **compulsory** course may be considered for payment to avoid a student having to attend high school beyond the regular time frame in order to graduate.
- The recipient must provide a receipt to the Department verifying the payment was made.
- If a receipt is not provided, the amount will be set up as an overpayment.
- Transportation costs to attend summer school via busing or private vehicle use can be considered if a student lives more than 1.6 km from the summer school site (which is the criteria that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development uses for the normal school year). The amount to be used cannot exceed .30/km. **The use of taxis for this purpose is not to be approved.**
- Approval can also be given to cover the cost of supplementary exams for a dependent student of a recipient. In order to qualify, the recipient must provide verification from the school that the exam is in a course required for the student to graduate in the appropriate year, or necessary to move into the next grade.

Medic Alert Bracelets & Lifeline Applications

- Staff may receive a request from clients or from a health professional on behalf of a client for the payment of a Medic Alert bracelet. Available options include:
 - purchasing a bracelet at a local store which has already been engraved with generic information (i.e. allergic to penicillin);
 - purchasing through a local retail store and arranging engraving for conditions where a generic description is not available; and
 - purchasing online through Medic-Alert. This has an annual membership fee which includes 24 hour protection and emergency information service. Should
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clients choose to go this route, they will be responsible for the costs as this fee will not be considered under the income support program.

- Lifeline Services is a personal response service whereby individuals can summon help at any time by pressing a personal help button. Funding for this service is not provided under the Income Support Program. Clients who request such funding should be referred to their Regional Health Authority for an assessment.

Technical Assistance Devices, Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- The Department considers the provision of technical assistance devices to those recipients who can provide verification that they are deaf or hard of hearing and that the item being requested is necessary for their safety, health and well-being. Any or all three of the following items per recipient can be considered as a one-time only purchase:
 - Visual Smoke Detector up to \$250.00 per purchase inclusive of HST
 - Alert-master telephone/doorbell combination system up to \$155.00 per purchase inclusive of HST
 - TTY device up to \$422.00 per purchase inclusive of HST
- All regular monthly costs and/or maintenance costs associated with these items will be the responsibility of the recipient.

Special Clothing/Bedding

- In **extraordinary** circumstances, up to \$500 can be provided to clients for emergency clothing/bedding. Situations include:
 - where an individual was incarcerated and the landlord disposed of their belongings,
 - clients who have lost belongings as a result of fire/flood etc. (although staff should be aware that Red Cross intervenes in these cases),
 - complex needs clients who, as a result of their situation, require assistance with special clothing or bedding, and
 - other circumstances deemed eligible upon consultation with the CSM.

- This benefit is not meant to supplement basic benefits to purchase clothing such as winter boots or any other clothing expected to be purchased from the Income Support basic benefits.

Procedure: Cleaning Septic Tanks

- An authorization can be provided to a particular company and they can bill the Department directly or a recipient can make the payment and the Department can reimburse the client upon receipt of the invoice.

Paternity Testing

- Departmental social workers will confirm when there is potential for support and paternity testing is required.
- The paternity testing service will require payment authorization prior to conducting the test.
- The CSO should ensure that the laboratory conducting the testing is accredited. If it is not, authorization for payment should not be provided.
- The CSO will provide an Authorization to Provide Goods and Services to accompany the requisition being sent to the paternity testing service.

Summer School Registration Fees/Transportation and Supplementary Exams

- The CSO must request that the recipient obtain verification from the school that the completion of a specific course(s) in summer school is necessary.
- Generally, a Service Authorization is provided directly to the school board; however, there may be occasions when the client pays the school board directly and the Department can reimburse the client once a receipt is provided.
- Transportation to summer school can be considered for busing or private vehicle use if a student lives more than 1.6 km from the summer school site. Payment can be made directly to the client for private vehicle or to a busing service by way of a Service Authorization. Where the client pays the

busing company/school directly, the client can be reimbursed upon presentation of the receipt.

- In the case of supplementary exams, the client must provide the CSO with verification from the school that the exam is in a course necessary for the student to move into the next grade, or for the student to graduate with their peer class.

Medic Alert Bracelets

- Once medical documentation is received from a health care professional, approval may be given for the purchase of a Medic Alert bracelet. The maximum approval amount in CAPS is \$200; however, the most economical option must be chosen.
- Once the Medic Alert bracelet is purchased, the receipt can be submitted for reimbursement up to the allowable maximum.

Technical Assistance Devices, Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- CSO's are requested to determine eligibility for such items upon receipt of verification of deafness or hard of hearing and by completing a thorough assessment of such factors as living arrangements, family supports, and access to such items from other sources. For example, persons who may be board and lodging with relatives may or may not require the Alert Master telephone/doorbell combination. One has to assess all factors which relate to safety, health and well-being on a case by case basis.
- All devices purchased would be considered the property of the recipient and in this regard must be portable should recipients move from one accommodation to another.
- Verification of recipients being deaf or hard of hearing can be obtained from physicians, audiologist, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA-NL) or an approved professional as determined by regulations/policy.
- This benefit can be paid directly to the recipient or to the supplier via Service Authorization; but if paid to a recipient, a receipt of purchase will be required within 90 days. Failure to provide a receipt would result in an overpayment on recipients' file.

Authority Level: Client Services Officer

Requests for paternity testing

Requests for extermination and fumigation services

Requests for summer school fees/ supplementary exams

Client Service Managers/Regional Manager of Income & Social Supports

Requests for items of special needs up to \$2,500

Requests for septic tank cleaning

Regional Directors

Requests for items of special needs that exceed \$2,500

Date revised: April 9, 2024
