



INFORMATION BULLETIN January 2015

Income Assistance Policies to Support Persons Fleeing Abuse

This Information Bulletin was developed by CCWS in Collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation.

What is different about the new policies?

Recent provincial policy and procedure changes can help support people fleeing abuse who apply for income assistance. Effective December 2012, the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation amended its BC Employment and Assistance Program policy and procedures to streamline the process for these applicants.

The ministry's policy states that the decision about eligibility for applicants who have identified as fleeing abuse is to be expedited and these applicants are to be exempted from the following standard eligibility requirements:

- Completion of a work search
- Two-Year Financial Independence Test
- Employment-Related Obligations

The revised policy and procedures for persons fleeing abuse have been consolidated in one place at the following link:

http://www.gov.bc.ca/meia/online_resource/application/fleeabuse/

Under the revised policy and procedures, a person who identifies as fleeing abuse is now flagged as the highest priority for follow up by ministry staff. *Please note that the person does not need to be staying in a transition house in order to identify as fleeing abuse.*

How does someone apply?

A person who needs to apply for income assistance initiates the application process by completing the Self Serve Assessment and Application (SSAA) tool using the following link:

<http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/bcea.htm>

In order to expedite the application process and ensure that applicable exemptions are considered, the person fleeing abuse should indicate this on their application (Screen 84 of the SSAA) or identify this during an interview with ministry staff. This ensures that their case receives critical priority. Persons fleeing abuse will receive an eligibility interview within one business day. Verification of the abuse is not required at the time of application.

Applicants who do not have access to a computer for the online SSAA tool may contact the ministry by telephone (1-866-866-0800) or in-person at a local office where ministry staff can assist with the application process.

What if a person is unhappy with the eligibility decision?

Applicants and/or recipients of income assistance who disagree with a worker's eligibility decision may request a reconsideration of the decision. The following brochure outlines the ministry's Reconsideration and Appeal process:

<http://www.sdsi.gov.bc.ca/publicat/bcea/appeal.htm>

People who apply for or receive assistance under the BC Employment and Assistance Program have a right to quality service, fair access to programs and transparent decision-making. The following outlines the ministry's Service Standards for the Employment and Assistance Program:

http://www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/publicat/posters/servicestandards_poster08.pdf

Who can I call for more information or other concerns?

A Community Relations and Service Quality (CRSQ) Manager is available in every area of the province and can be contacted by telephone to review situations where there are issues related to access to services and/or the standard of service expected from ministry staff. The CRSQ Manager is the primary contact to assist with complex and sensitive cases involving individuals fleeing abuse. The CRSQ Manager is able to review case specific situations where timely access to services is a concern. However, the CRSQ Manager isn't able to reverse eligibility decisions which would typically fall within the Reconsideration and Appeal process.

- Please note that these contact numbers are for stakeholders; clients can be transferred through a Ministry supervisor or worker

Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation – Community Relations & Service Quality Managers		
Area	CRSQ Manager	Telephone Number
Vancouver Island	Jeannine Bousquet	250 619-2811
	Janis Ruel	250-240-2343
Vancouver Coastal	Jean Lofthouse	604 660-2212
Fraser	Michele Lauzon	604 -760-4471
	Kellie Vachon	604-999-6476
Interior	Harleen Price	250 828-4714
North	Ian Harrower	250 645-3905

For further information or for help with your interagency work at the local level contact:

Community Coordination for Women's Safety:

Tel: 604-633-2506 ext. 15

Email: ccws@endingviolence.org

Website: <http://endingviolence.org/prevention-programs/ccws-program/>

**Many thanks to the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation
for helping to prepare this Information Bulletin.**