

SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANCE FOR SENIORS



Special Needs Assistance for Seniors

INFORMATION BOOKLET

If you have any questions or require additional information, please call the **Alberta Supports Contact Centre** toll-free at 1-877-644-9992 or 780-644-9992 in Edmonton

Alberta 
Government

Special Needs Assistance for Seniors

INFORMATION BOOKLET

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Special Needs Assistance for Seniors

The **Special Needs Assistance for Seniors** program is available to help seniors with the cost of appliances, minor home repairs and some medical costs. The program provides a lump-sum payment to eligible low-income seniors. The maximum assistance available is \$5,000 in a benefit year.

You are eligible to submit a request to the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program if you:

1. are eligible to apply for and have submitted an application for Seniors Financial Assistance (Alberta Seniors Benefit program), and
2. have income within the income thresholds listed below.

Benefit Year

The current benefit year is from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015. Special Needs Assistance determines eligibility based on the date the expense was incurred (date of service).

Income

Income information

Your 2013 income information is used to assess your claim. We get this information from the Alberta Seniors Benefit program. Total income (line 150 of your tax return) is used to determine your eligibility for benefits.

Income thresholds

Single Seniors	
Annual Income	Funding Level
Less than \$21,800	Primary and Secondary items
\$21,801 – 26,200	Primary items only
Over \$26,200	No funding

Senior Couples	
Annual Income	Funding Level
Less than \$34,300	Primary and Secondary items
\$34,301 – \$42,500	Primary items only
Over \$42,500	No funding

How it Works

Submit Information

It is not necessary to submit a request form. You may just send a receipt or estimate to the program. Ensure that the receipt or estimate has your name, Personal Health Number, and address and phone number on it.

Authorization

If you wish to authorize an individual to help you with your request, you need to complete a request form. The program will contact this person if we have any questions or need more information. This individual may also contact the program to obtain information about the request on your behalf.

Supporting documentation

Please send all supporting information for each item you need help with, so your request can be assessed in a timely manner. **You must send a receipt or estimate for all items requested.**

The program can accept a receipt for an item that was bought up to 12 months ago. The date of the receipt is compared to the date we receive your claim. You must have been eligible to make a claim when the item was purchased.

What happens after you apply?

Your request will be thoroughly reviewed. You will be notified by mail regarding the outcome of the review.

Contact information is available on page 13.

General Information for Specific Items

Appliances/Furniture

Only one of each allowed appliance/furniture type is considered in a lifetime (i.e., you can only receive funding for a fridge one time from this program).

Only **one** appliance/furniture item will be considered in a benefit year (e.g., you can only receive funding for either a fridge OR a washer in **one** benefit year, not both). Some exceptions are allowed (see page 6).

Where you live determines which appliances/furniture items you can claim:

- Homeowners and mobile homeowners — all appliances/furniture
- Renters — bed, microwave, television and vacuum
- Applicants living with and/or renting from family/friends — bed
- Long-term care residents — television
- Lodge and designated supportive living residents — bed and television

Home Repairs

Maximum of \$15,000 in a lifetime

Homeowners or mobile homeowners are eligible to receive assistance for home repairs for their primary residence. The following information will help you in making your request.

Land Title: A copy of your current land title will be obtained by the program to verify that you are the homeowner or have a legal life estate interest in your residence. Mobile homeowners must submit a copy of the **bill of sale** the first time they make a claim for home repairs.

Length of Ownership: You must have owned and lived in the home for three consecutive years immediately prior to claiming assistance with home repairs. You are expected to live in the home for three years after obtaining assistance for home repairs. You may be required to refund any benefit received for home repairs if you move within three years after receiving the benefit. Replacement of a critical item (e.g., furnace, hot water tank) may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Once in a Lifetime: Assistance is provided once in a lifetime for many of the funded home repairs (e.g., furnace, roof, hot water tank, well, and pressure tank).

Estimate/Receipt: Please submit an estimate or receipt, so we know what work needs to be done and how much it will cost. The estimate/receipt should be from a contractor and include the contractor's name, address, phone number and a breakdown of the repairs and their individual costs. If you or your family/friends do the work, assistance cannot be provided for the cost of labour.

Primary Funded Items

Appliances/Furniture

The following are maximum amounts. Repairs to funded appliances may also be considered.

Please submit a receipt or estimate with your request for assistance.

Appliance	Maximum	Notes
Bed	\$500	includes mattress and frame
Dryer	\$400	Washer & dryer may be applied for together
Refrigerator	\$700	Refrigerator & stove may be applied for together
Stove	\$700	
Washer	\$500	

The maximum amounts include GST, delivery, and installation/hook-up and environmental fees.

Home Repairs

- **Bathroom Repairs** — not renovations
- **Carpet Replacement** — maximum \$1,500. A doctor's note is required confirming replacement is medically necessary due to a respiratory condition. Must be replaced with hard surface material.
- **Cistern**
- **Electrical Repairs** — minor electrical repairs to meet electrical service standards. A contractor must indicate the repair is required to meet safety code standards.
- **Faucets/Taps** — maximum \$150 each (maximum five)
- **Furnace Replacement/Repair** — maximum \$3,000
- **Hot Water Tank** — maximum \$700
- **House Roof Repair/Replacement** — maximum \$2,900
- **Mobile Home Skirting** — maximum \$1,600
- **Plumbing Repairs**
- **Pressure Pump/Tank**
- **Sewer/Septic Tank**
- **Steps/Landings/Railings** — exterior stair replacement/repair — maximum \$900 each (maximum two)
- **Sump Pump Repair/Replacement**
- **Toilet** — maximum \$300 each (maximum two)
- **Well Repair/Replacement**

Health Supports

- **CPAP Machine and Supplies** — maximum \$1,600 (once every five years) for a non-auto medically required Continuous Positive Airway Pressure Machine. \$200 per year maximum for supplies in any subsequent benefit year. Requirements:
 - copy of Level 1 Sleep Assessment Polysomnogram
 - a prescription from physician with fixed pressure setting
 - a receipt or estimate for a CPAP machine
 - a 3 – 4 week report (Level 3) from your current machine if applicable
- **Diabetic Supplies** — Receipts or a current 12 month prescription printout from your pharmacist showing the diabetic supplies purchased is required. Diabetic supplies include test strips, lancets, needles, antiseptic swabs and ‘sharps’ containers. Diabetic supplies do not include prescribed medications. Maximums apply.
- **Nutritional Beverages** — A doctor’s note is required once a year prescribing the number of bottles of nutritional beverages required per day. First time applicants may receive benefits for up to three months based on this note. After the initial three months, funding is determined using receipts. Only Ensure, Boost, Glucerna, Resource Diary, THICK-IT and Nepro will be considered. Maximums apply.
- **Podiatry** — maximum \$25 per month for regular maintenance (nail trimming and callus removal).
- **Prescription Costs** — assistance is provided for a portion of the co-payment amount for prescription medications only. Over-the-counter medications and medications not on the Drug Benefit List are not considered. Funding is provided for the co-pay amount you pay above the average of \$45 per month for a single senior or one senior couple and \$90 per month for a senior couple. **Benefits are provided for the current benefit year only. Your previous 12 month prescription printout from your pharmacist is needed to determine your anticipated prescription costs during this benefit year.** New seniors may provide documents from their pharmacy confirming their anticipated prescription costs over a 3-month period, including Alberta Blue Cross coverage for Seniors, or a prescription printout from the time they turned 65 to current.

Personal Supports

- **Celiac groceries** — maximum \$50 per month. A doctor’s note confirming celiac disease is required the first time you apply.
- **Clothing** — maximum \$600. A doctor’s note confirming weight gain or loss of 50 lbs or more is required.
- **Funeral Expenses** — maximum \$1,200. Assistance with funeral expenses is limited to the funeral of a spouse. The surviving spouse must be 65 years of age at the time of the spouse’s death and must be enrolled in the Alberta Seniors Benefit program. Request for a benefit must be received within 12 months of the date of death.

- **Lift Chair** — maximum \$800. Funded once in a lifetime. Not funded when the senior lives in a long-term care facility. Repairs to a lift chair may also be considered.
- **Medical Trips** — Assistance is provided for medical trips greater than 100 kilometers (round trip) to see a medical specialist or for medical testing/treatment. A report from the medical specialist or the medical facility specifying the dates of the appointment and confirmation of attendance is required.
 - Medical trips are funded based on a per diem amount, taking into consideration distance travelled, transportation costs, meals and parking. It is not necessary to submit receipts for these items.
 - If you stayed overnight and paid for accommodations, you will be required to submit the receipt. A maximum of \$75 per night is funded.
- **Medication Administration Fee** — maximum \$70 per month. You may be referred to the Alberta Health Services Home and Community Care Program. Benefits may only be paid to seniors residing in lodges, designated supportive living and supportive living facilities. Documentation from the facility stating the monthly medication administration fee and the effective date is required. Benefits are provided for the current benefit year only.
- **Personal Response Service** — maximum \$30 per month monitoring fee and \$80 installation. An estimate or receipt is needed for installation and/or monthly monitoring fees. Assistance is not provided for internal facility response services. Benefits are provided for the current benefit year only.
- **Utility Arrears** — once in a lifetime. A benefit may be provided to a senior who has received a disconnection notice (in their name) from their utility company. Only the amount owing past 60 days will be considered.
- **Wigs** — maximum \$250 each (two per year). A doctor's note confirming the medical condition is required the first time you apply.

Secondary Funded Items

Appliances/Furniture

The following are maximum amounts. Repairs to funded appliances may also be considered. **Please submit a receipt or estimate with your request for assistance.**

Appliance	Maximum
Microwave	\$100
Television	\$300
Vacuum	\$150

The maximum amounts include GST, delivery, and installation/hook-ups and environmental fees.

Home repairs

- **Eaves/Soffit/Fascia** — maximum \$1,000
- **Exterior Doors** — maximum \$500 for each door (maximum two). (Does not include screen or storm doors).
- **Garage/Car Port/Roof Repair/Replacement** — maximum \$1,200

Health Supports

- **Foot Orthotics** — maximum \$400 each (maximum two funded per lifetime). Must be custom-made foot orthotics.

Personal Supports

- **Housekeeping/Yard Maintenance** — maximum \$1,200 annually. Assistance is provided for light housekeeping, grass cutting and snow removal only. Please submit a doctor's note the first time you apply specifying the mobility/health condition that does not allow you (and your spouse) to do your own housekeeping/yard maintenance.

Note

- Applicants living with, renting from, or paying family members are not eligible for assistance under **housekeeping or yard maintenance**. Seniors residing in a lodge, designated assisted living facility or supportive living facility are not eligible for assistance with these expenses.
- A doctor's note is not required if you and your spouse (if applicable) are 80 years of age or older.

Example of an Acceptable Housekeeping/Yard Maintenance Receipt

Service Provider/Company Name Address Telephone number
Sold to: Senior's name and address
Breakdown of service provided (housekeeping, grass cutting, snow shoveling.)
Date of service and hours — cost per hour — total cost
Signature and printed name of service provider

- **Laundry Costs** — maximum \$40 per month (\$80 per month for a senior couple). Seniors living in a lodge, designated supportive living or long-term care facility may receive assistance with laundry costs. Receipts or a letter from the facility confirming the charge for laundry and the effective date are required. Benefits are provided for the current benefit year only.
- **Respite Care** — maximum four weeks. Respite care (relief for a caregiver) is provided to a senior who lives with their caregiver (spouse or family member) who provides daily care to the senior. A receipt or estimate from the care centre is required.

Special Circumstances

The following are special circumstances that may affect the assessment of your claim.

Estates

Estates of a deceased senior may be eligible to receive reimbursement for expenses that a senior incurred prior to his or her deaths if the request is received within 3 months of the date of death.

Seniors in a long-term care/supportive living facility

If you are a senior couple and have been involuntarily separated because one of you is residing in a long-term care facility, lodge or supportive living facility, ensure that you let the Ministry of Health know that you are involuntarily separated. Depending on your specific situation, Alberta Seniors Benefit may provide additional support. Special Needs Assistance for Seniors may also take into consideration that you are maintaining two residences.

If you live in long-term care or designated supportive living, the Supplementary Accommodation Benefit you receive from Alberta Seniors Benefit (if claimed on your income tax) will be deducted before calculating your eligibility for assistance from the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors programs.

Expenses prior to 65 years of age

The program is for seniors over the age of 65 years. Any expenses prior to your 65th birthday are not eligible for funding. Assistance is not provided for spouses under 65 years of age nor dependant children or grandchildren.

Accounting

If you provide an estimate rather than a receipt to the Special Needs Assistance program, you may be asked to send in receipts showing that you purchased and paid for the items for which you received funding. Receipts should be mailed to the program within three months of receiving the payment. If receipts have not been received, a reminder letter will be sent.

You may, at a later date, be asked to send in receipts, so keep all receipts for funded items. If you do not spend the money on the items that are funded, you may be asked to return the money. A senior who does not send a receipt or return the money may not be eligible for assistance from the program in the future.

Appeal Process

If your request for assistance is denied or if you disagree with the amount of assistance you receive, you can appeal the decision. Before you decide to appeal a decision, you should first contact the program to provide any new related information and to obtain a complete explanation from the assessor.

You can contact the program by phoning the Alberta Supports Contact Centre toll-free at 1-877-644-9992 or 780-644-9992 in Edmonton.

Step	Action	Special Needs Assistance for Seniors
1	Telephone	Assessor
2	Write	Director
3	Write	Assistant Deputy Minister
4	Submit <i>Notice of Appeal Form</i>	Citizens' Appeal Panel

An independent committee of three private citizens called a Citizens' Appeal Panel hears Step 4 appeals. These are independent appeal panels and their decisions are binding on both the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program and the senior who is making the appeal.

Collection of Personal Information

The personal information provided to the Ministry of Health, including information provided by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), is collected under the authority of the *Seniors Benefit Act* (RSA 2000) and the *Seniors Benefit Act General Regulation* and managed in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (RSA 2000). The personal information you provide will be used to determine your eligibility for the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program and for other related administrative and processing purposes.

If you have any questions about the collection of your personal information, please see contact information on next page.

Contacts

Ministry of Health

By Mail

P.O. Box 3100
Edmonton, AB T5J 4W3

By Phone

Alberta Supports Contact Centre
Toll-free: 1-877-644-9992
Edmonton and area: 780-644-9992

TDD/TTY

Toll-free: 1-800-232-7215
Edmonton and area: 780-427-9999

By Fax

780-422-5954

Office hours are 8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Please have your Personal Health Number (PHN) ready before calling.

www.health.alberta.ca

Superseded

www.health.alberta.ca

Special Needs Assistance for Seniors

Ministry of Health

PO Box 3100

Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4W3

Alberta Supports Contact Centre

Toll-free: 1-877-644-9992

Edmonton area: 780-644-9992

Deaf or hard of hearing with TDD/TTY units
please call 1-800-232-7215 or
780-427-9999 in Edmonton and area.

The logo for the Government of Alberta, featuring the word "Alberta" in a white, cursive script font, followed by a small white square icon. Below "Alberta" is the word "Government" in a white, sans-serif font.