

New Brunswick Income Assistance (IA) Client Handbook



Chapter 1: Introduction to New Brunswick Income Assistance

New Brunswick's Income Assistance (IA) program, administered by the Department of Social Development, is designed to be a temporary support for residents who cannot meet their basic needs (food, shelter, clothing, and essential utilities). It is generally considered a **program of last resort**, meaning you must exhaust all other potential sources of income before qualifying. The program is not a one-size-fits-all solution; it is designed to help you stabilize your situation while providing support and resources to move toward self-sufficiency.

The Two Program Streams

The IA program operates under two main streams, which determine the level and type of support you receive:

1. **Transitional Assistance (TA):** This stream is for individuals and families who are considered to have **potential for training and employment**. It focuses on connecting clients with job training, education, and career development programs to help them re-enter the workforce and achieve financial independence.
2. **Extended Benefits (EB):** This stream is for individuals who are deemed **disabled, deaf, or blind** (as certified by the Department of Social Development's standards) and are not expected to be able to participate in significant employment. It provides a higher level of long-term support and typically has higher asset exemptions.

Key Terminology

- **Case Manager (CM):** Your primary point of contact at the Department of Social Development. They manage your file, determine your eligibility, calculate your monthly benefit, and approve special needs requests.
- **Employability Assessment:** A mandatory meeting or process for Transitional Assistance clients to evaluate their skills, education, work history, and barriers to employment.
- **Social Supports NB:** The government portal and resource hub for various social services, including Income Assistance.
- **Benefit Unit (or Household Unit):** Refers to all persons living together whose needs and income are considered when determining the assistance amount (e.g., a single person, a couple, or a parent and their dependents).



Chapter 2: Eligibility and Application Process

Applying for Income Assistance requires full transparency and providing extensive documentation. The process begins with establishing basic eligibility, followed by a detailed

financial and employability assessment.

Basic Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for Income Assistance in New Brunswick, you must meet the following criteria:

- **Residency:** You must be a current resident of New Brunswick.
- **Financial Need:** Your income and assets must be below the maximum limits set by the Department of Social Development for your specific household unit.
- **Other Income Exhausted:** You must demonstrate that you have applied for and are receiving all other possible sources of income for which you are eligible (e.g., Employment Insurance, Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, etc.).
- **Cooperation:** You must agree to cooperate with all program requirements, including the Employability Assessment and seeking employment or training.

The Application Steps

1. **Initial Contact:** Call the Social Development Teleservices line (1-833-733-7835). A representative will ask you initial questions to screen for potential eligibility and set up an appointment.
2. **Application Appointment:** You will have a scheduled phone or in-person meeting with a Case Manager. You must be prepared to provide extensive personal and financial information for yourself and all members of your household unit.
3. **Required Documentation:** You must gather and provide the following documents for all household members:
 - Medicare Cards (or proof of application)
 - Social Insurance Numbers (SINs)
 - Birth Certificates or other government-issued photo ID
 - Proof of Address (lease, utility bill, etc.)
 - **Full Financial Records:** Bank statements for the past 30-90 days, ownership documents for vehicles, investment/asset statements.
 - **Income Proof:** Recent pay stubs, statements for Employment Insurance (EI), Canada Pension Plan (CPP), or any other source of income.
 - **Other Support Applications:** Proof that you have applied for all other benefits like EI or CPP.
4. **Employability Assessment:** If you are determined to be in the **Transitional Assistance (TA)** stream, you must undergo an Employability Assessment. This is a crucial step that determines the employment services you must engage in to maintain eligibility.
5. **Decision and Benefit Calculation:** Once all information is reviewed, the Department of Social Development will notify you of the decision in writing, including the reason for the decision and the amount of your monthly benefit.

Chapter 3: Understanding Your Monthly Benefit

Your monthly Income Assistance payment is comprised of two components: the **Basic Household Rate** and the **Shelter Allowance**. The total benefit is calculated based on your specific household size, location, and any existing sources of income.

1. Basic Household Rate

This non-shelter portion of your benefit is a fixed monthly amount intended to cover essential living costs, including:

- Food
- Clothing
- Personal and Household Needs
- Routine Transportation
- Utilities and Fuel (non-shelter portions)

The Basic Household Rate is determined by the size and composition of your household unit.

2. Shelter Allowance

This portion of the benefit is intended to cover rent, mortgage payments, property taxes, and home insurance.

- The Shelter Allowance is a **maximum allowable amount** set by the government, based on the size of your household unit and your specific location (e.g., Fredericton, Moncton, or a rural area).
- **You will receive the lesser of:**
 - Your actual shelter cost (rent/mortgage and required utilities).
 - The maximum Shelter Allowance for your area and household size.

Net Benefit Calculation

Your final monthly IA cheque is calculated using the following simple formula:

Total Monthly Entitlement (Basic Household Rate + Shelter Allowance)

MINUS

Deductible Income (from all sources)

EQUALS

Your Monthly Income Assistance Cheque

Important Note on Utilities: The Basic Household Rate includes a portion for utilities and fuel. However, if your actual utility costs (electricity, heat) are higher than the standard allowance portion, you may be eligible to apply for a **Special Benefit** or other external energy assistance programs, like the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP), depending on availability.



Chapter 4: Assets and Income Exemptions

Maintaining your eligibility requires that your total **assets** and monthly **income** remain below specific limits. However, not all assets are counted, and certain types of income are **exempt** (not deducted) from your IA cheque.

Asset Exemptions (What you can keep)

Assets are defined as resources that can be converted to cash, such as savings, investments, or property.

Asset Type	Transitional Assistance (TA) Limit	Extended Benefits (EB) Limit
Liquid Assets (Cash, Bank Accounts)	Up to \$1,000 for a single person.	Up to \$10,000 for a single person or family unit.
Primary Residence	The client's principal home is fully exempt , regardless of value.	The client's principal home is fully exempt .
Vehicles	One essential vehicle for transportation (valued below a specific limit, e.g., typically under \$5,000-\$10,000) is usually exempt .	Similar exemptions for an essential vehicle.
Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP)	Fully Exempt.	Fully Exempt.
Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP)	Fully Exempt.	Fully Exempt.

Warning: Having assets above the set limits may result in the denial of your application or the suspension of your IA benefits until the excess funds are "spent down" on basic needs.

Income Exemptions (What is not deducted)

Income includes any money received, such as wages, government benefits, or gifts. While most income is deducted, some is entirely or partially exempted to encourage work and self-sufficiency.

Income Type	Deduction Rule
Wages from Employment	The first \$500 per month of net employment income is fully exempt . Beyond \$500, a 50% exemption is applied to the balance. <i>Example: If you earn \$700 net, \$500 is exempt. Of the remaining \$200, 50% (\$100) is exempt. Total exemption is \$600. \$100 is deducted.</i>
Canada Child Benefit (CCB)	Fully Exempt.
GST/HST Credit	Fully Exempt.
Canada Workers Benefit (CWB)	Fully Exempt.
Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) Withdrawals	Up to \$800 per month of certain trust fund or RDSP withdrawals may be exempt (primarily for EB clients).

Note: All income must be reported. The Case Manager will apply the correct exemptions to calculate your final deductible amount.



Chapter 5: Employment, Training, and Moving Toward Self-Sufficiency

The goal of Income Assistance is to provide temporary support while you work toward becoming financially independent. The Department of Social Development administers the **Career Development Opportunities Program (CDOP)** to help clients in the Transitional Assistance

stream achieve this goal.

The Role of the Employability Assessment

For most new IA applicants, the process starts with an **Employability Assessment**. This assessment is mandatory and serves to:

- Identify any **barriers to employment** (e.g., lack of skills, health issues, childcare needs).
- Determine your required level of **participation** in employment-related activities.
- Assign you to the appropriate stream: **Transitional Assistance (TA)** or **Extended Benefits (EB)**.

Career Development Opportunities Program (CDOP)

CDOP is the umbrella program that supports IA clients in training and employment. Depending on your assessment, participation may involve:

1. **Skills Enhancement:** Enrolling in adult education, upgrading high school credits, or pursuing post-secondary education or trade certification.
2. **Job Search and Readiness:** Participating in workshops on résumé writing, interview skills, and job search techniques.
3. **Work Placements and Experience:** Taking part in work placements or subsidized employment to gain recent experience.

Maintaining Eligibility While Working

Working while on IA is highly encouraged due to the significant income exemption:

- **Financial Incentive:** The \$500 full exemption plus the 50% partial exemption means your overall household income is always higher when you are working than when you are only receiving IA.
- **Reporting is Critical:** You **must** provide your monthly pay stubs and any other income verification to your Case Manager by the due date (usually the 5th of the month) to ensure your benefit is calculated correctly for the following month.

Educational Supports

If approved for education or training through CDOP, the program may cover costs beyond basic tuition, such as:

- Books and supplies.
- Travel and parking.
- Necessary fees.
- Childcare expenses related to attending school or training.

Always get pre-approval from your Case Manager or CDOP representative before enrolling in a program or incurring any related costs.



Chapter 6: Childcare and Family Supports

For Income Assistance clients with dependent children, the Department of Social Development offers several critical supports beyond the basic IA payment to promote the health, well-being,

and development of children.

Childcare Subsidy Program

The most crucial support is the provincial **Childcare Subsidy Program**, which helps make licensed childcare affordable.

- **Eligibility:** Generally available to families who are low-income, including all IA recipients, to subsidize the cost of licensed facilities (daycares, after-school programs, etc.).
- **How it Works:** The subsidy can cover a significant portion, or even the full amount, of childcare fees. The subsidy is usually paid directly to the licensed childcare provider.
- **Purpose:** This subsidy is essential for parents to be able to participate in job training, job searches, or employment without the prohibitive cost of care.
- **Application:** You must apply for the subsidy separately from your IA application. You will need to provide proof of your IA status and the details of your chosen licensed provider.

Children's Essential Services

While the Basic Household Rate includes funds for general clothing and needs, parents may be eligible for one-time special benefits for specific essentials related to their children:

- **School Supplies:** Possible supplements around the beginning of the school year to cover costs for supplies and sometimes extracurricular activities.
- **Graduation Benefit:** A specific benefit may be available to assist with the costs associated with a dependent child's high school graduation (e.g., cap and gown, prom expenses).
- **Recreational/Camp Funds:** In some cases, community organizations partner with the Department to offer funding for children's sports registration or summer camps.

Prenatal and Postnatal Benefits

Pregnant IA clients may be eligible for supplements to cover extra needs related to pregnancy:

- **Special Diet Allowance:** Supplements for medically-recommended nutritional needs during and after pregnancy.
- **Infant Needs:** Possible assistance for essential items related to the newborn, such as a crib, car seat, or specialized formula, which can be applied for through the "Household Setup" special benefit or the Prenatal/Postnatal Benefit Program.

Important Family Note: The **Canada Child Benefit (CCB)** is a vital, non-taxable federal benefit for parents, and critically, it is **fully exempt** from being deducted from your IA payment. This remains a primary source of income for children's needs.

Chapter 7: Medical and Health Benefits

All Income Assistance recipients and their dependents are provided with a New Brunswick Health Card and access to essential medical, dental, and vision services not covered by the standard provincial health plan.

Prescription Drug Coverage

- **Access:** Your IA status provides coverage for most prescription medications that are on the New Brunswick Drug Plan formulary.
- **Process:** You must present your valid New Brunswick Health Card at the pharmacy. The Department of Social Development is billed directly for the cost of approved medications.
- **Non-Formulary Drugs:** If your doctor prescribes a drug not covered by the formulary, your doctor may be able to submit a request for an **Exception** to the Department for special approval.

Dental Care

IA clients receive coverage for **Basic Dental Services**. This typically includes:

- **Routine Check-ups and Cleanings:** Twice a year preventative visits.
- **X-rays:** Necessary diagnostic X-rays.
- **Essential Procedures:** Fillings, simple extractions, and some root canal therapy on a case-by-case basis.
- **Exclusions:** Extensive cosmetic dentistry, bridgework, and complex specialty procedures are usually **not covered** without special authorization.

Vision Care

- **Eye Exams:** Coverage for a basic eye examination once every two years (or more frequently if medically necessary).
- **Eyeglasses:** Coverage for basic lenses and frames is provided on a needs-based schedule (usually once every two years). You must choose from a selection of basic frames covered by the plan.

Medically-Related Special Benefits

Your Case Manager may authorize financial assistance for specific health-related needs not covered by the standard health plan, provided they are medically essential:

- **Diabetic Supplies:** Essential testing strips, needles, and related supplies.
- **Incontinence Supplies:** Products necessary for daily living.
- **Medical Transportation:** Financial help to cover travel costs (gas, bus fare, or mileage) to attend essential medical appointments outside your local area.
- **Special Diet Allowance:** A monthly financial supplement for individuals with medically-confirmed conditions (e.g., diabetes, celiac disease, severe allergies) that require a higher cost or specialized diet. This requires a **written medical recommendation** from a physician or specialist.

You must always discuss any planned non-emergency medical expenses with your Case Manager *before* incurring the cost to ensure coverage or approval for a Special Benefit.

Chapter 8: Reporting, Reviews, and Changes in Circumstance

The Income Assistance program is dynamic, requiring constant reporting to ensure your benefit accurately reflects your current financial situation and household needs. Failure to report changes promptly is the most common reason for benefit reduction, overpayment, or

suspension.

Mandatory Monthly Reporting

The most crucial ongoing requirement is the monthly report for all income received.

- **Due Date:** This report (which typically includes pay stubs, bank statements, or other income proof) is usually due by the **5th of the month** for the previous month's income.
- **Purpose:** Your Case Manager uses this information to calculate the exact amount of your next month's IA cheque, applying all applicable exemptions.
- **Consequence of Late Reporting:** Late or missing reports will lead to an **automatic suspension or reduction** of your next cheque until the documentation is submitted.

Reporting Changes in Circumstance

You must immediately report **any** change that could affect your eligibility or benefit amount. Do not wait for your monthly report date.

Category of Change	Examples of What to Report Immediately	Consequence of NOT Reporting
Household	Marriage/Common-law relationship, separation/divorce, birth of a child, a child leaving home, someone moving in/out.	Incorrect benefit calculation, potential overpayment, or denial of necessary benefits.
Income/Assets	Starting/stopping a job, receiving a tax refund, an inheritance, winning a lottery, receiving money from a trust fund, receiving a lump-sum payment (e.g., EI, CPP).	Overpayment, which you will be required to repay.
Shelter/Address	Moving to a new location, change in rent amount, starting/ending a mortgage.	Incorrect Shelter Allowance calculation, potential eviction risk.
Health Status	Change in medical condition that affects your ability to work (critical for both TA and EB streams).	Failure to meet employability requirements, potential benefit suspension.

Overpayments and Repayment

- **What is an Overpayment?** An overpayment occurs when you receive more Income Assistance than you were entitled to, often because income or a change in circumstances was not reported on time.
- **Repayment:** The Department of Social Development has the right to recoup all overpaid funds. This is typically done through **deductions** from your future monthly IA cheques until the debt is paid in full.
- **Your Action:** If you are notified of an overpayment, contact your Case Manager immediately to understand the amount, the reason, and the monthly repayment schedule.



Chapter 9: Work Transition and Leaving Income

Assistance

The successful transition off Income Assistance and into self-sufficiency is the ultimate goal of the program. New Brunswick has supports in place to help make this transition smooth and ensure clients do not face a sudden "cliff" of losing all benefits immediately upon gaining employment.

Financial Support During Transition

The IA program's income exemption policy is specifically designed to incentivize work and ease the financial transition:

- **IA Top-Up:** Because of the generous **\$500 fully exempt plus 50% partial exemption** rule, you will continue to receive a reduced IA cheque (a "top-up") even as your wages increase, ensuring your income is always higher when working.
- **Maintaining Benefits:** Even as your IA cheque is reduced to zero due to your employment income, you may remain eligible for certain **extended benefits** for a period to cover the transition phase.

Extended Health Benefits

One of the greatest fears of transitioning to work is losing crucial health benefits. New Brunswick offers an extension:

- **Temporary Health Coverage:** You may be eligible to retain your prescription drug, dental, and vision coverage for a period (e.g., 6 to 12 months) after your IA cheque stops, to ensure you can manage your health needs while establishing yourself in your new job. This allows you time to enroll in a new employer health plan, if available.
- **Eligibility:** To qualify for extended health benefits, you must have lost your IA eligibility **solely due to employment income**.

Essential Transition Supports

As you transition out of the program, your Case Manager or CDOP representative may be able to approve final, one-time supports:

- **Start-Up Costs:** Assistance with one-time, non-recurrent costs directly related to starting a new job, such as:
 - Work-specific clothing or uniform purchase.
 - Essential tools or equipment.
 - Initial transportation costs until the first paycheck.
- **Childcare:** The Childcare Subsidy remains available and is crucial. The subsidy amount is reassessed based on your new employment income, but it continues to prevent a sudden drop-off in support.

Goal: The aim is to ensure that a client's net income (wages + top-up IA + value of extended benefits) is **always significantly greater** than the IA benefit alone.



Chapter 10: Other Available Supports: Housing,

Federal Benefits, and Special Programs

While New Brunswick Income Assistance (IA) provides the foundational financial support, clients often qualify for a range of additional programs from both the provincial and federal governments. Maximizing these supports is essential to achieving financial stability and well-being.

Housing and Shelter Supports

Housing is a critical component of financial stability. The Department of Social Development's basic assistance includes a **Shelter Allowance**, but clients should also explore specialized housing programs managed by **New Brunswick Housing Corporation (NB Housing)**.

- **Social Housing / Subsidized Housing:** This refers to public housing units where rent is geared to the tenant's income (Rent-Geared-to-Income, or RGI). Rent is typically calculated as **30% of the household's total gross monthly income**. IA clients are eligible to apply, but waiting lists can be long.
- **Affordable Housing Program:** This program may provide rental subsidies to low-income renters living in eligible privately owned housing developments.
- **Rent Bank Grant:** This is an important provincial resource designed to help renters facing a **temporary, unplanned financial crisis** that jeopardizes their tenancy. It is intended for **eviction prevention** and may cover arrears, utility deposits, or other related expenses.

Federal Benefits for IA Clients

Most provincial social assistance payments are viewed as a "last resort" and are reduced dollar-for-dollar by income from other sources. However, certain federal tax benefits are often **fully or partially exempt** from being deducted from your IA cheque.

Federal Benefit	Eligibility & Treatment on IA
Canada Child Benefit (CCB)	Fully Exempt. This non-taxable monthly payment for families with children under 18 is generally not deducted from your IA benefit.
GST/HST Credit	Fully Exempt. The quarterly Goods and Services Tax / Harmonized Sales Tax credit is generally not deducted from your IA benefit.
Canada Workers Benefit (CWB)	Often Exempt/Partially Exempt. The portion of the CWB you receive is typically exempt from deduction.
Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) & Old Age Security (OAS)	Deductible Income. If you are a senior on IA, the GIS and OAS payments are considered income and will reduce your IA cheque .
Canada Pension Plan (CPP)	Deductible Income (with Exemptions). CPP Retirement and CPP Disability (CPP-D) are considered income and will reduce your IA cheque , though a small portion may be exempted.

New Brunswick Special Programs

Beyond basic financial support, the Department of Social Development offers several specialized programs that IA clients can access, often based on individual assessment of need.

- **Health and Medical Supports (Health Card Coverage):** Provides coverage for prescription drugs, basic dental, vision care, and necessary mobility/adaptive equipment.
- **Financial Supplements and Special Benefits:** Your Case Manager can approve funds for non-recurrent or emergency needs, such as emergency assistance, household setup, special diets, and medical transportation.
- **Low Income Seniors' Benefit (LISB):** A separate, annual, non-taxable payment for low-income seniors that is often **exempt** from being clawed back from your IA cheque.

Chapter 11: Final Checklist and Resources

Successfully managing your New Brunswick Income Assistance (IA) file requires consistent effort, organization, and knowing where to turn for help. This final chapter provides a checklist to ensure you're on track and a list of essential contacts for future support.

Your IA Client Checklist

Area	Action Item	Status (Self-Check)
Communication	Always notify your Case Manager immediately (within 5-10 business days) of <i>any</i> change in income, assets, address, or family composition.	☐ Done
Income Reporting	Submit your monthly income report (e.g., pay stubs) on time, typically by the 5th of the month.	☐ Done
Appointments	Attend all scheduled appointments, including Employability Assessments and annual reviews.	☐ Done
Federal Benefits	Ensure you have applied for all eligible federal benefits (e.g., CCB, GST/HST Credit, OAS/GIS, CPP/PP-D).	☐ Done
Health Card	Verify your New Brunswick Health Card is active and understand what medical/dental benefits you are covered for.	☐ Done
Employment/Training	If required to participate, maintain regular contact with your CDOP representative.	☐ Done
Documentation	Keep an organized, secure file of all correspondence from	☐ Done

Area	Action Item	Status (Self-Check)
	Social Development (letters, notices, receipts, etc.).	

Essential Contact Information

Resource	Service Provided	Phone Number (Toll-Free)
Social Development General Inquiries & Application Intake	All IA program inquiries, reporting abuse/neglect, or starting a new application.	1-833-733-7835 (1-833-SDD-STEL)
After-Hours Emergency	For urgent situations that cannot wait until business hours.	1-800-442-9799 (Inside New Brunswick)
211 New Brunswick (For community and social service referrals)	Free, confidential referral service to all social, community, health, and government services.	2-1-1 (or 1-855-258-4126)
Ombud NB	An independent body that can investigate complaints of administrative unfairness against government departments.	1-888-465-1100

Major Social Development Office Locations

City	Address	General Hours
Moncton	774 Main St, Moncton, NB E1C 9Y3	Mon-Fri, 8:15 am to 4:30 pm
Saint John	1 Agar Pl, Saint John, NB E2L 5G4	Mon-Fri, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm
Fredericton	460 Two Nations Crossing, Fredericton, NB E3A 0X9	Mon-Fri, 9:00 am to 4:30 pm

Appendix: Community Food Resources

General Food Assistance Resource

- Dial **2-1-1** or visit **nb.211.ca** for the most up-to-date and comprehensive list of all local food programs (food banks, community meals, meal delivery, etc.) across the province.

Moncton Area Food Resources

Organization	Service Focus
Peter McKee Community Centre	Primary Moncton Food Bank, providing grocery hampers.
Ray of Hope Soup Kitchen	Free hot lunchtime meals, Monday to Friday, no questions asked.
Salvation Army Community Family Services	Emergency food assistance and other social programs.

Saint John Area Food Resources

Organization	Service Focus
North End Food Bank	Provides food hampers to residents in the North End.
Romero House Soup Kitchen	Emergency meals and basic necessities for the food insecure.
Family Resource Centre Community Kitchen	Programs to learn cooking and prepare frugal meals (registration required).

Fredericton Area Food Resources

Organization	Service Focus
Greener Village (Fredericton Food Bank)	Provides grocery hampers, community gardens, and a learning kitchen.
Fredericton Community Kitchens Inc.	Serves free meals multiple times a day, 7 days a week.
Community Food Smart	Group buying program for fresh, affordable produce bags.