



Income Assistance Program - Current Client Questions

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) is reviewing its Income Assistance Program to see if there are any changes that can be made to improve the program. To help identify those changes, ECE would like to hear from Income Assistance clients from across the NWT so they can better understand the program's strengths and challenges and areas that need improvement.

Your participation is **voluntary!** Any information you share with us will remain **anonymous** – so no one will be able to link your name to your answers. You can decide at anytime that you no longer want to take part.

Thank you for your help!

Completed survey's can be returned to a Client Services Officer, a Government Services Officer, or emailed to Brenna_Kelln@gov.nt.ca

1. How satisfied are you with the current Income Assistance program?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

2. Do you understand how eligibility for the Income Assistance program works?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

3. Have you ever used the Income Assistance Handbook to help you understand the program?

- Yes
- No (If you answered no, go to Question 5)



4. Did you find the Income Assistance Handbook helpful?

- Yes
- No

5. Did you find it difficult to apply for Income Assistance?

- Yes
- No (If you answered no, go to Question 7)

6. What difficulties did you experience when applying for Income Assistance? (Select all that apply)

- Forms are too difficult to fill out
- I couldn't provide all the information that ECE wanted
- There was too much paperwork
- It took too long before I received my money
- Staff did not answer my questions
- I didn't understand why I was refused for Income Assistance
- Other (please specify) _____

7. Would you say the amount of money you receive from Income Assistance is too little, about right or too much?

- Too little
- About right
- Too much

8. Thinking about how you spend your money, what is the main area that you are having trouble covering costs? (Only select one)

- Food
- Rent or shelter
- Clothing
- Utilities
- Transportation
- Other (please specify) _____



9. If Income Assistance was able to provide funding for one additional benefit what would be your first choice?

- Home internet
- Transportation (e.g., bus fare, taxi vouchers, or gas reimbursement)
- Cell phone or landline
- Tenant insurance
- I don't feel additional Income Assistance benefits are needed
- Other (please specify) _____

10. Unearned income is money that a client gets from other places such as: GST and income tax refunds, Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security, Employment Insurance and Worker's Compensation, investments, monetary gifts from family and friends, and gambling winnings. The Income Assistance program allows clients up to \$1,200 of unearned income per year before their benefits are reduced.

Do you think that \$1,200 in unearned income each year is too little, about right, or too much?

- Too little
- About right
- Too much

11. Earned income is the money a client receives from wages, selling arts and crafts, honorariums or scholarships, self-employment, babysitting and income received through hunting, trapping, and fishing. The Income Assistance program allows a client to keep additional income over their monthly income assistance payment when they work. If you are single with no dependents you receive an exemption of \$200 plus 15% of remaining employment income each month without your benefits being reduced. If you have one or more dependents you receive an exemption of \$400 plus 15% of remaining employment income each month without your benefits being reduced.

Do you understand how the earned income exemption works?

- Yes
- No



12. Do you think that \$200 plus 15% in earned income each month for a single person with no dependents is too little, about right or too much?

- Too little
- About right
- Too much

13. Do you think that \$400 plus 15% in earned income each month for a person with dependents is too little, about right or too much?

- Too little
- About right
- Too much

14. The current Income Assistance program currently does not count other incomes, including money intended for children (such as child support and fostering), money from residential school settlements, and up to \$500/per person/per year for land treaty payments.

Are you aware of these additional income exemptions?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

15. Are these income exemptions sufficient?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

16. How can this be improved?

17. Have you ever stopped receiving Income Assistance?

- Yes
- No (If you answered no, go to Question 21)



18. If yes, for what reason(s)? (Select all that apply)

- Had enough income to meet my financial needs
- Did not take part in or complete a Productive Choice
- Did not look for work
- Refused to work or did not use resources that could help you get work
- Held back information about my income or relationship status
- Made false or misleading statements
- Left a job without cause
- Got fired
- Other (please specify): _____

19. A client may be refused Income Assistance for a variety of different reasons such as: making false or misleading statements; holding back information about their income or relationship status; not looking for a job; and getting fired from their job with just cause. When this happens, a client must wait 60-90 days, depending on the reason, before they can re-apply.

Do you think clients should be refused Income Assistance for a period of time if they do not follow the rules of the Program?

- Yes
- No

20. Do you think having to wait 60 or 90 days is too short, about right or too long?

- Too short
- About right
- Too long

21. What is another way the Income Assistance program can encourage clients to follow the rules?



22. The Income Assistance program is intended to encourage and support greater self-reliance. Being self-reliant means different things for different people. Some may want to work on education or training, others on job skills. It may mean doing volunteer or part-time work. Self-reliance is about finding what is right for you at this time. It is based on your family, future career or employment goals and the resources available in your community.

Do you think the Income Assistance program helps clients become more self-reliant?

- Yes
- No

23. Do you think the Income Assistance program goal of encouraging and supporting self-reliance is appropriate?

- Yes
- No

24. ECE is creating a new Income Assistance program just for seniors and persons with disabilities.

Are you currently a senior or a person with a disability?

- Yes
- No (If you answered no, go to Question 31)

25. Do you think there should be an annual application for seniors and persons with disabilities?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

26. Did you find the aged/disability and incidental allowances were sufficient to meet your additional needs?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure



27. Do you think there are additional costs that seniors and persons with disabilities have that should be incorporated into the new program?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

28. Do you think there should be one application for all seniors programs (Income Assistance, Seniors Home Heating Subsidy, Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit)?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Not applicable

29. Do you think the number of documents required by seniors and person with disabilities should be reduced?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

30. If you are a person with a disability, did you find the documentation required to prove your disability was too complicated, just right or too vague?

- Too complicated
- Just right
- Too vague
- Not applicable

31. The Income Assistance program requires clients to take part in a productive choice (unless they are a senior or person with disabilities). A productive choice is a program or activity such as: wage employment; career planning; education and training; volunteer community work; traditional activities; parenting; caring for an adult family member; or wellness activities.

Have you participated in a productive choice in order to receive benefits?

- Yes
- No



32. Do you think the Income Assistance program should require applicants to participate in a productive choice in order to receive benefits?

- Yes
- No

33. Do you think the Income Assistance program should require that applicants look for work?

- Yes
- No

34. How can the Income Assistance program encourage clients to look for work?

35. Overall, how can the existing Income Assistance program be improved to better serve the needs of clients?

36. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us?