

AiSH

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

Renewing AiSH

Explaining the Changes to AiSH

April 2005

Alberta
SENIORS AND
COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

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Dear AISH recipient,

The Government of Alberta is making changes to the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program. I am pleased to provide you with this booklet that will help explain the changes and how they may affect you.

In September 2004, an MLA committee reviewing AISH asked Albertans for ideas about how government could improve the program. Over 18,000 Albertans responded with their suggestions. These ideas and suggestions helped the committee see and understand what was important to the people who rely on AISH.

This review was very important. It looked at more than the living allowance that AISH clients receive each month. The committee made eleven recommendations.

We reviewed the recommendations of the committee and responded by making several changes to the AISH program. In this booklet, you will find information about the changes to AISH and what they will mean to you.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact your AISH worker or visit the AISH website at www.seniors.gov.ab.ca/AISH

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yvonne Fritz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'Y' and 'F'.

Yvonne Fritz

Minister of Seniors and Community Supports

Living Allowance

The MLA committee heard from Albertans that many AISH clients were having a hard time making ends meet on \$850 per month. In response, the government is increasing the maximum monthly living allowance.

In April 2005, we are raising the living allowance from \$850 to a maximum of \$950 per month. Then, in April 2006, the benefit level will rise to a maximum of \$1,000 per month.

This means you will get more money each month for your basic needs like rent, food and personal needs.

Also, starting in May 2005, you will not have to pay the co-pay fee for your prescriptions.

Health Benefit

The AISH health benefit package that you already receive will **not change**.

Through the AISH health benefit package you will continue to receive:

- Alberta Health Care Insurance
- Alberta Aids to Daily Living supports
- prescription drugs
- eye care
- dental care
- emergency ambulance services
- essential diabetic supplies

Supplementary Benefits

In October 2005, extra benefits, called supplementary benefits, will be available to many AISH clients. This means that you will no longer need to leave the AISH program to apply for extra benefits under Alberta Works Income Support. These benefits will be available to you if you have less than \$3,000 in assets.

Some of the extra benefits may be:

- school supplies for children
- some medical supplies
- overdue payments for utilities
- diabetic and special diets for medical conditions
- special transportation
- allowance for guide dogs

Employment Income

In October 2005, you will be able to keep more of the money you earn from working.

If you are single and working, you will be able to earn up to \$400 each month without it affecting how much you receive from AISH. If you are married or a single parent and work, you will be able to earn \$975 each month. This means you can earn \$200 more before it affects your AISH living allowance.

The exemption rate on income you earn over these amounts will increase from 25% to 50%, up to a maximum as indicated below.

Employment Income Per Month:

	You keep everything of:	You keep 50% of the:	Is deducted dollar for dollar from your AISH benefit:
Singles	income up to \$400	income between \$400-\$1,000	income over \$1,000
Couples/ Single Parents	income up to \$975	income between \$975-\$2,000	income over \$2,000

This means that if you are single, you can earn \$1,649 per month and still be eligible for the AISH health benefit. If you are married or a single parent, you can earn \$2,437 per month and still be eligible for the AISH health benefit.

Asset Limit

The asset limit of \$100,000 has not changed. This means that you can have up to \$100,000 in cash, savings, property or trusts and still be eligible to receive AISH. You may also own a home, a vehicle adapted for your disability and one other vehicle and still be eligible for AISH.

Canada Pension Plan (CPP)

Starting in May 2005, you will no longer have to apply for Canada Pension Plan (CPP) retirement benefits at age 60. Now you can wait until you are 65 years old and collect the full CPP benefit.

Clarifying Rules for Other Income

Later this year, we will be reviewing the rules about how the different types of money you receive affect your AISH living allowance. We will look at these rules to make sure they are clear and easy to understand.

Additional Services

We are also making changes to AISH that will help to improve our services to you.

These changes include:

- **Getting expert advice.** Starting in July, we will bring in experts to help with complex eligibility decisions and appeals. This will give us a better understanding of complicated health conditions and disabilities so we can make the best decisions possible.
- **Meeting with your AISH worker.** Your AISH worker is available to meet with you to make sure you have the supports and services you need. Your AISH worker can help by suggesting other programs and resources that may be useful to you.
- **Working with disability organizations.** Starting in September 2005, we will work with disability organizations to make sure that AISH workers get the most current information and training available. Ongoing training will provide AISH workers with more information about disabilities, programs and services so they can give you the best advice and service possible.
- **Coordinating supports and services.** We will work with other government departments to better coordinate the services and supports that are available to you.

The changes we are making will improve the AISH program for you. It is important that you understand how these changes impact you. Your AISH worker can answer any questions or concerns you have about AISH and your benefits.

Timelines

When Things Will Change

APRIL 2005

Living allowance rises to a maximum of \$950 per month Page 2

MAY 2005

Prescription drug co-pay fee removed Page 2

Full Canada Pension Plan retirement benefits Page 6

JULY 2005

Getting expert advice..... Page 7

AISH worker meetings Page 7

SEPTEMBER 2005

Working with disability organizations..... Page 7

OCTOBER 2005

Supplementary benefits Page 4

Employment income exemptions Page 5

Review of income exemption rates Page 7

APRIL 2006

Living allowance rises to a maximum of \$1,000 per month . Page 2

Contact Information

For more information about any of these changes, please contact your AISH worker.

If you don't know who your AISH worker is, you can call 310-0000 (toll free) and the operator can connect you to the AISH office nearest you. AISH offices are open Monday to Friday from 8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

To obtain a copy of the complete Report and Recommendations of the MLA AISH Review Committee, please contact your AISH worker or call 310-4455 (toll free).

Clients with TTY Deaf or Hard of Hearing Relay can reach Alberta government offices by calling (780) 427-9999 in Edmonton or 1-800-232-7215 in other Alberta locations.

The report is also on the Internet at www.seniors.gov.ab.ca/AISH/



This guide can be downloaded off the AISH website at
www.seniors.gov.ab.ca/aish

For additional copies of this guide, or if you require the guide in an alternate format, please contact your AISH worker.

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