



Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme The Support for Self-reliance Scheme

Encourages and assists Comprehensive Social Security Assistance able-bodied unemployed recipients and recipients who are not working full-time to secure full-time paid employment and move towards self-reliance.

Introduction

The Support for Self-reliance (SFS) Scheme is a programme under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme, which aims to encourage and assist able-bodied persons aged 15 to 59 and being unemployed or working part-time or earning less than the prescribed amount set by the Social Welfare Department (thereafter collectively called the applicant) to move towards full-time paid employment and self-reliance while providing them with financial assistance. In addition to satisfying the residence requirement and financial tests, an applicant also has to enroll in the SFS Scheme as a condition of receiving assistance.

Components of the SFS Scheme

With the aim of assisting an applicant to improve his/her employability and maximize his/her chances to secure paid employment, the SFS Scheme comprises three main components:

1. The Active Employment Assistance (AEA) programme
2. The Community Work (CW) programme
3. Disregarded Earnings

Related undertaking

Once an applicant agrees to enroll in the SFS Scheme, it means that he/she is willing to prove himself/herself to be making substantial efforts to participate in all activities arranged by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) to help him/her secure employment while receiving CSSA. To acknowledge his/her obligation, he/she is required to sign a Job Seeker's Undertaking to indicate that he/she fully understands his/her obligations to comply with all the requirements under the SFS Scheme.

Consequences of non-compliance with the Job Seeker's Undertaking

An applicant is not eligible for CSSA if he/she refuses to sign the Job Seeker's Undertaking or if he/she fails to comply with any of the requirements stated in the Job Seeker's Undertaking. In such cases, the Director of Social Welfare is entitled to:

- ◆ cease processing his/her application for CSSA;
- ◆ terminate further CSSA payment to him/her and other members of his/her household if his/her application for CSSA has been approved; and
- ◆ request him/her to repay the amount of CSSA payment, if any, overpaid arising from non-compliance.

The AEA programme

Under the AEA programme, personalised employment assistance service will be rendered to individual applicant by SWD to meet his/her needs. The programme aims to empower the applicant to overcome his/her work barriers, enhance his/her employability and find a paid job. Through the provision of these services, the applicant will be:

- ◆ able to get access to up-to-date labour market information through the vacancy search terminal available at each Social Security Field Unit;
- ◆ assisted to develop action plans to find employment and to review the plans regularly;
- ◆ matched with available job vacancies;
- ◆ arranged to participate in employment assistance programmes run by operating agencies commissioned by SWD; and
- ◆ helped to sustain employment after securing paid work.

The CW programme

An applicant is also required to perform community work up to a maximum of three days or 24 hours a week to help him/her:

- ◆ develop a work habit;
- ◆ improve employability;
- ◆ widen social network;
- ◆ enhance self-esteem;
- ◆ pave the way for eventual gainful employment; and
- ◆ contribute to society, in parallel to job search process.

Disregarded Earnings (DE)

With an aim to encourage CSSA recipients to secure and sustain employment, there is a provision of DE under the CSSA Scheme. The arrangements for DE are as follows:

- ◆ monthly income that a recipient earns from his/her job will be partially disregarded up to a prescribed limit;
- ◆ the first month's income that a recipient earns from a new job will be totally disregarded, provided that the applicant has not enjoyed this benefit more than once during a two-year period.

The Work First Principle

SWD is committed to providing a safety net for those who are in genuine need and cannot support themselves or their families. However, an applicant has to understand that the granting of CSSA payment is only a temporary measure to assist him/her to tide over a period of financial hardship. He/She has the obligation to secure and sustain employment and support himself/herself and his/her family through the employment assistance services offered to him/her to reduce his/her and his/her family's dependence on public funds.

Appeals

If an applicant disagrees with a decision made by SWD, he/she has the right to lodge an appeal at the Social Security Appeal Board. An appeal must be lodged within four weeks from the date of the notification issued by SWD. Enquiries about appeal procedures can be made at any Social Security Field Unit.

Enquiries

For more information about the SFS Scheme, please visit SWD Homepage at <http://www.swd.gov.hk> or make enquiry at the nearest Social Security Field Unit. You may also contact SWD at the Hotline telephone number 2343 2255 or fax number 2763 5874.

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Social Welfare Department
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