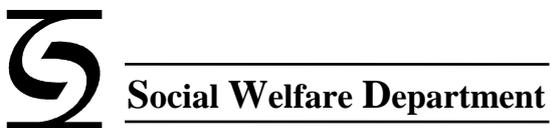


**A GUIDE
TO
COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE
(Internet Version)**



(February 2017)

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COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Foreword	1
2. Objective of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme	2
3. Eligibility Criteria	3-6
4. Support for Self-reliance Scheme	7-8
5. Application Procedures	9-10
6. Notification of Result of Application and Method of Payment	11
7. Commencement Date of Assistance	12
8. Types and Rates of Payment	13-29
9. Disregarded Earnings	30
10. Disregarded Training/Retraining Allowance	31
11. Assessment of Assistance	32-40
12. Permissible Limits of Absence from Hong Kong During Receipt of Assistance	41
13. Portable Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme for Elderly Persons Retiring to Guangdong and Fujian	42-43
14. Waiver of Medical Charges	44
15. Appeal Procedures	45
16. Complaint Procedures	46
17. Other Welfare Services	47
18. Notice to Applicants/Guardians/Appointees	48-49
19. Reporting Suspected Fraud and Abuse Cases	50
20. Enquiries	51

1. FOREWORD

The primary objective of this Guide is to provide Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) applicants with information on the Scheme. By so doing, we aim to provide better customer service and achieve greater transparency.

This Guide serves to provide general information on the CSSA Scheme and is by no means exhaustive. If you require further information or have any enquiries about the scheme, please contact the nearest social security field unit. We are most happy to help you.

Information in this Guide will be updated as and when necessary. Your suggestions for improvement are most welcome.

For details, please visit our Departmental Homepage :

http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_socsecu/sub_comprehens/

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE SCHEME

The CSSA Scheme provides financial assistance to bring the income of needy individuals and families up to a prescribed level to meet their basic needs.

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible for assistance, an applicant must satisfy the following conditions :

A. Residence Requirement

The applicant must:

- (a) be a Hong Kong resident;
- (b) have held the Hong Kong resident status for not less than one year; and
- (c) have resided in Hong Kong for at least one year (since acquiring the Hong Kong resident status to the date prior to the date of application). The one-year residence need not be continuous or immediately before the date of application. Absence(s) from Hong Kong up to a maximum of 56 days (whether continuous or intermittent) before the date of application is/are treated as residence in Hong Kong.

Notes:

- (1) Persons whose presence in Hong Kong are unlawful and persons admitted to Hong Kong for a purpose other than residence (i.e. those who are subject to conditions of stay prescribed in Regulation 2 of the Immigration Regulation Cap. 115A, such as imported workers or visitors) are excluded from the CSSA Scheme.
- (2) Hong Kong residents aged below 18 applying for CSSA are exempted from the requirements at (b) and (c) above.
- (3) In exceptional circumstances, CSSA may be granted at the discretion of the Director of Social Welfare to a person who does not satisfy the residence requirement.

B. Financial Tests

The applicant must pass both the income and asset tests. If the applicant is living with any other family members, the application has to be made on a household basis. The total income and assets of all family members in the same household are taken into account in determining the family's eligibility for assistance.

(a) Asset Test

The total value of the capital assets^{Note 1} (including land/properties^{Note 2}, cash, bank savings, cash value of insurance policy, investments in stocks and shares, and other readily realizable assets) of the applicant and his/her family members must not exceed the following limits:

(i) Single person cases

	Asset limit (\$)
Able-bodied adult	30,500
Child, elderly person, disabled person or person medically certified to be in ill-health	47,000

(ii) Family cases

a) Cases involving any able-bodied adult

Able-bodied adults/children		Elderly persons, disabled persons or persons medically certified to be in ill-health	
No. of such members	Asset limit (\$)	No. of such members#	Asset limit (\$)
1	20,500	1	47,000
2	41,000	2	70,000
3	61,500	3	93,000
4 or above	82,000	4	116,000
		5	139,000
		6	162,000

[For example, the asset limit of a 7-member family, including two able-bodied adults, three able-bodied children, one disabled child and one elderly person, is \$152,000 (i.e. \$82,000 + \$70,000).]

b) Cases involving no able-bodied adult

No. of family members#	Asset limit (\$)
2	70,000
3	93,000
4	116,000
5	139,000
6	162,000

(As regards the asset limits for families with 7 or more members, please contact the social security field unit.)

Note 1 : Capital assets include those in Hong Kong, Macao, the Mainland or overseas.

Note 2 : All non-owner-occupied residential properties are treated as assets.

The value of an owner-occupied residential property is treated in the following manner:

- (1) The value of the property is totally disregarded for the asset test in cases where there is any member being old, disabled or medically certified to be in ill-health.
- (2) Where there is an able-bodied adult aged below 50 in the family and no other member being old, disabled or medically certified to be in ill-health, the value of the property will be included for the asset test after a grace period of 12 months.
- (3) For single parents with young children, the Director of Social Welfare may, at his discretion, extend the grace period to allow single parents to continue to receive assistance without disposing of their residential property, subject to meeting the following two conditions:
 - (i) the youngest child in the family is below 15 ; and
 - (ii) the total value of the assets held by the family, including the net value of the owner-occupied residential property, is insufficient to meet the family's maintenance for ten years according to CSSA standards.

The owner-occupied residential property of these single parent families will not be included for the asset test until the youngest child reaches 15.

(b) Income Test

The applicant and his/her family will be eligible for CSSA if their total assessable monthly household income is insufficient to meet their total monthly needs as recognized under the Scheme. When assessing a family's resources, training allowance and earnings from employment of those meeting the prescribed criteria can be disregarded up to a prescribed level (please see Sections 9-10 for details).

C. Additional criteria for able-bodied adults

A person aged 15-59 in normal health has to meet one of the following conditions :

- (a) not being available for work for reasons acceptable to the Social Welfare Department (for example, studying or having to look after young children or sick or disabled family members at home); or
- (b) earning not less than \$2,160 per month and working not less than 120 hours per month; or
- (c) in the case of being unemployed or earning less than \$2,160 per month or working less than 120 hours per month, actively seeking full-time jobs and participating in the Support for Self-reliance Scheme of the Social Welfare Department (please see Section 4 for details).

4. SUPPORT FOR SELF-RELIANCE SCHEME

The Support for Self-reliance (SFS) Scheme is a programme under the CSSA Scheme, which aims to encourage and assist the following able-bodied CSSA applicants aged 15 to 59 to secure employment to move towards self-reliance while providing them with financial assistance :

- (1) applicants being unemployed or with monthly earnings or working hours less than the prescribed level set by the Social Welfare Department [please see Section 3C(c) for details] (thereafter collectively referred as the unemployed CSSA applicants); and
- (2) single parents and child carers with their youngest child aged 12 to 14.

The Scheme comprises the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance and the arrangement of Disregarded Earnings.

A. Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance (IEAPS)

The Social Welfare Department has commissioned non-governmental organizations to operate the IEAPS to assist able-bodied CSSA applicants overcome work barriers and enhance their employability to find paid employment[#] as soon as possible through the provision of a range of one-stop integrated employment assistance services on family basis. The services include :

- (a) Ordinary Employment Assistance Services
 - to provide unemployed CSSA applicants with employment assistance services, including labour market information, regular interviews to help them develop action plans to find employment and arranging job matching, etc.
- (b) Strengthened Employment Assistance Services
 - to provide unemployed CSSA applicants in receipt of Ordinary Employment Assistance Services with training and Work Exposure Services.
- (c) New Dawn Project Services
 - to provide employment assistance services and information on child care to single parents and child carers on CSSA whose youngest child is aged 12 to 14.
- (d) Special Training and Enhancement Programme
 - to provide unemployed CSSA applicants aged 15 to 29 with specialized employment assistance services, including motivational and disciplinary training.

[#]Unemployed CSSA applicants have to find paid employment with working hours no less than 120 per month and earnings no less than \$2,160 per month. Single parents

and child carers on CSSA with their youngest child aged 12 to 14 have to find paid employment with working hours no less than 32 per month.

Applicants have the obligations to actively seek work and are required to receive the employment assistance services provided by the operating agencies.

B. Disregarded Earnings (DE)

With an aim to encourage CSSA applicants to secure and sustain employment, there is a provision of DE under the CSSA Scheme (please see Section 9 for details).

Applicant's Undertaking

Once an applicant agrees to enrol in the SFS Scheme, 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.

Non-compliance with the Undertaking

An unemployed CSSA applicant is not entitled to 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. The Social Welfare Department will cease processing his/her application for CSSA, terminate further CSSA payment to him/her and other members of his/her household and request him/her to repay the amount of CSSA payment, if any, overpaid to him/her or his/her family arising from such non-compliance.

Also, the Social Welfare Department will deduct \$200 per month from the CSSA payment of the single parents and child carers on CSSA with their youngest child aged 12 to 14.

Other Information

A leaflet on this Scheme can be obtained from the Social Welfare Department.

5. APPLICATION PROCEDURES

A. How to apply

A person can make an application directly to a social security field unit near to his/her place of residence by phone, by fax, by e-mail, by post or in person. An application may also be made through a referral to the Social Welfare Department by another government department or a non-governmental organization. Upon receipt of an application, staff of the Social Welfare Department will conduct investigation and verification of the applicant's circumstances and information provided [see (C) below] through office interview and home visit. All application procedures are processed in Hong Kong. Under normal circumstances, and if the applicant or his/her guardian/appointee can produce all the necessary information, the application process can be completed within four weeks.

B. Persons unfit to apply

If an applicant is aged below 18 without a parent or legal guardian or is an adult aged 18 or above who has been medically certified to be unfit to make a statement on his/her own, an appointee will be appointed by the Director of Social Welfare to act on his/her behalf.

C. Supporting documents/information required

Depending on the circumstances of individual cases, staff of the Social Welfare Department will ask the applicant and his/her family members to produce the following documents :

- Identity documents
(such as Hong Kong Identity Cards (for those aged 11 or above), Birth Certificates (for those aged below 11) and Certificate of Exemption, etc.)
- Marriage certificates or documents of divorce, if applicable
- Proofs of accommodation expenses
(such as rent receipts, rent card, tenancy agreement, receipts of water & sewage charge, demands for rates and receipts of management fee, etc.)
- Proofs of assets (including those in Hong Kong, Macao, the Mainland or overseas)
(such as bank passbooks and bank statements showing the latest balance, time deposit receipts, insurance policy statements, stocks, proof of property/land ownership and other documentary proofs of valuable possessions, etc.)
- Proofs of educational expenses (such as receipts of school fee and school bus fee, etc.) and student handbooks
- Travel documents
(such as Passports, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Re-entry Permit, HKSAR Document of Identity for Visa Purposes, Hong Kong Entry Permit, Home Visit Permit and One-way Permit, etc.)
- Proofs of income

(such as Mandatory Provident Fund pay-records, pay slips and, employer's statement, etc.)

- Medical follow-up cards/appointment slips
- Proofs of financial relationship with other family members (including parents and siblings)
- Other relevant documents as required by the Social Welfare Department.

Where necessary, the Department will make enquiries to the Director of Health/Chief Executive of Hospital Authority for medical reports, or to the applicant's employer/ex-employer for verification. The Department will also seek information related to the applicant and his/her family members from the Immigration Department, other government departments and organizations (including banks).

We have to rely on the applicant's co-operation to give us the relevant information to enable us to process the application speedily and effectively.

6. NOTIFICATION OF RESULT OF APPLICATION AND METHOD OF PAYMENT

A. Notification of result

After completion of investigation, a formal notification letter will be sent to the applicant.

If the application is successful, a detailed breakdown of the components of the monthly payment, pay-day, payment method and period of payment will be indicated in the notification letter.

If the application is unsuccessful, the reason(s) for rejection will be given in the notification letter.

If the applicant disagrees with a decision made by the Social Welfare Department, he/she has the right to lodge an appeal with the Social Security Appeal Board (please see Section 15 for the appeal procedures).

B. Method of payment

CSSA payment is usually credited to the applicant's/guardian's/appointee's designated bank account (joint bank account is not accepted) once a month. Under exceptional circumstances, special delivery of cash directly to the applicant can be arranged. For urgent cases, cash payment may be paid to the applicant at the social security field unit.

7. COMMENCEMENT DATE OF ASSISTANCE

CSSA payment will be calculated from the date of receipt of the application by the Social Welfare Department (or the date of application or referral if the application is referred by another organization) or the date of eligibility, whichever is the later.

Able-bodied unemployed adults aged 15-59 are required to participate in the SFS Scheme as a condition of receiving assistance [please see Item C(c) of Section 3]. Their monthly entitlement normally starts one month after the date of application. However, in genuine hardship cases, the Director of Social Welfare may, at his discretion, make payment from the date of application.

8. TYPES AND RATES OF PAYMENT

Payments can be broadly classified into three types :

- standard rates
- supplements
- special grants

A. Standard rates

Standard rates, as shown below, are paid to different categories of recipients to meet their basic needs.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Standard Rates</u>			
	(\$ per person per month)			
	<u>Single person</u>	<u>Family member</u>		
<u>Elderly person aged 60 or above</u>				
Able-bodied/50% disabled	3,435	3,240		
100% disabled	4,155	3,675		
Requiring constant attendance	5,850	5,365		
<u>Ill-health/Disabled adult aged under 60</u>				
Ill-health/50% disabled	3,435	3,240		
100% disabled	4,155	3,675		
Requiring constant attendance	5,850	5,365		
<u>Disabled child</u>				
50% disabled	3,865	3,370		
100% disabled	4,585	4,100		
Requiring constant attendance	6,265	5,790		
<u>Able-bodied adult aged under 60</u>				
Single parent/Family carer	—	2,630	2,375	2,105
Other adult	2,420	2,160	1,950	1,735
<u>Able-bodied child</u>	2,910	2,410	2,165	1,935

[Note : For the purpose of payment of standard rates, a child is defined as one aged below 15 or aged 15-21 receiving full-time education (students receiving post-secondary education are normally not eligible under the Scheme), while an ill-health or disabled person must obtain medical certification on his/her health condition from a doctor of a public hospital or clinic.]

B. Supplements

(a) Long-term supplement

An annual long-term supplement is payable to families involving any member who is old, disabled or medically certified to be in ill-health for the replacement of household and durable goods if they have received assistance continuously for 12 months or more. The amount payable depends on the number of such eligible members in the family. The rates are as follows :

	<u>Amount of Supplement</u> <u>(\$)</u>
Family with 1 such eligible member	2,150
Family with 2 or more such eligible members	4,300

(Note: Able-bodied adults/children are not entitled to long-term supplement.)

(b) Single parent supplement

A monthly supplement of \$340 is payable to single parent families to recognize the special difficulties which single parents face in bringing up a family.

To be eligible for this supplement, the single parent must be living with at least one child aged below 18 or aged 18-21 receiving full-time education who must be unmarried and eligible for the assistance. The single parent must also satisfy either of the following conditions :

- he/she is widowed or divorced or separated, or is an unmarried mother or father;
- or
- his/her spouse is :
 - (i) receiving medical treatment in a hospital and the period of hospitalization has been lasting or is expected to last for six months or over; or
 - (ii) serving a sentence of at least nine months in prison or any penal institution; or
 - (iii) being prevented by law from entering Hong Kong; or
 - (iv) living apart physically for other reasons by virtue of which the payment of single parent supplement is considered appropriate by the Director of Social Welfare.

(c) Community living supplement

A monthly community living supplement of \$325 is payable to recipients who are old, disabled or medically certified to be in ill-health and who are not living in institutions to better support their stay in the community.

(d) Transport supplement

A monthly transport supplement of \$270 is payable to severely disabled persons who are medically certified to be 100% disabled or requiring constant attendance and in the age group of 12 to 64 to encourage them to participate more in activities away from home, thereby enhancing their integration into society.

(e) Residential care supplement

A monthly residential care supplement of \$325 is payable to recipients who are old, disabled or medically certified to be in ill-health and who are living in non-subsidised residential care places to ease their financial burden.

- b) Water and sewage charge allowance Amount of allowance depends on the number of persons sharing the water meter

<u>Number of persons sharing the water meter</u>	<u>Amount of allowance per person per month (\$)</u>
1	Nil
2	8.7
3	12.0
4	14.0
5	16.2
6	18.2
7	20.2
8	21.8
9	22.9
10 or above	23.9

[For example, if a family of four is sharing a water meter with six other tenants, the family will be entitled to a water and sewage charge allowance of \$95.6 ($\23.9×4) a month.]

- c) Grant for rent deposit Up to two times of the appropriate maximum rent allowance
- d) Grant for water, electricity and gas/LPG deposits for accommodation in public housing Actual expenses

- e) Domestic grant removal Public housing estate or interim housing
- From \$4,862 up to a maximum of \$18,659 depending on the number of eligible members to cover removal cost, basic fitting out expenses and telephone installation fees
- Private housing
- From \$1,616 up to a maximum of \$4,439 depending on the number of eligible members
- Housing for Senior Citizens
- Single person : \$4,862
Couple : \$11,229
(The grant covers the costs of removal, telephone installation and essential household items in connection with the removal.)
- Institutions for the elderly or residential care homes for persons with disabilities
- \$808
- f) Grant to cover telephone installation fees Actual fees charged for installing a standard telephone set
(Payable to cases demonstrating a genuine need for a telephone, e.g. elderly/disabled persons living alone who are in need of a telephone for communication at times of emergency.)

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| g) | Grant to cover monthly telephone charges | Actual fees for renting a residential telephone line and a standard telephone set or the monthly fees for basic plan of mobile phone service
(Payable to cases demonstrating a genuine need for a telephone.) |
| h) | Grant for emergency alarm system for elderly recipients | Installation fee on a one-off basis :
up to a maximum of \$2,500; or
Monthly service charges :
up to a maximum of \$100 per month |
| i) | Grant for renewal of electrical fittings | Actual expenses |
| (ii) <u>Family grants</u> | | |
| a) | Grant to cover fares to and from hospital/clinic and other essential travelling expenses | Actual expenses (usually by the cheapest means of available transport) |
| b) | Burial grant | Up to a maximum of \$14,500 |

(iii) Medical and rehabilitation grants

- a) Special diet allowance
- Confirmation of the need and medical recommendation from a doctor of a public hospital or clinic based on the medical condition is required.
- Higher rate : \$1,080 per month
(For those certified as suffering from anaemia, malignancy, diabetes, tuberculosis (under treatment), or as requiring a fluid diet, or under a post-operative condition or those with stoma.)
- Lower rate: \$570 per month
(For those certified as suffering from liver disease, kidney disease, disseminated lupus erythematosus or as requiring an ulcer diet.)
- For patients of the above diseases, confirmation of the need and medical recommendation from a doctor of a public hospital or clinic based on the medical condition is still required in order to be eligible for the special diet allowance.
- b) Grant to cover costs of medical, rehabilitation, surgical appliances and hygienic items (e.g. wheel-chair, hearing-aid, stoma bags, disposable diapers)
- Actual expenses subject to medical recommendation (where appropriate, the recommendation of an occupational therapist or a physiotherapist is also acceptable)
- c) Grant to cover costs of glasses
- Up to a maximum of \$500 (or more in exceptional cases) (normally, the special grant is given to cover the cost of only one pair of glasses within 24 months)

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| d) Grant to cover costs of dental treatment (tooth extraction, dentures, crowns, bridges, scaling, fillings and root canal treatment) | Actual expenses or the ceiling amount of the dental treatment item set by the Social Welfare Department
(The applicant should approach one of the dental clinics designated by the Social Welfare Department to provide such service. He/She is free to turn to a registered dentist of a non-designated clinic for the same service after he/she has approached one of these designated clinics for an estimate of cost. A grant will be paid to meet the cost charged by the non-designated clinic, up to the cost estimated by the designated clinic or the ceiling amount set by the Social Welfare Department, whichever is the less.) |
| e) Care and attention allowance | Actual expenses subject to medical certification and a social worker's recommendation |
| f) Grant to cover the charge for respite service | Actual fees charged less a portion of the standard rate |
| g) Grant to cover the medical examination fee for admission to a subvented residential institution | Actual fees |
| h) Grant to cover the annual medical examination fee for elderly recipients in residential care homes for the elders and residential care homes for persons with disabilities | Up to a maximum of \$200 |

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| i) | Grant to cover fees for Home Help Service/ Integrated Home Care Service | Actual service fees (cost of meals excluded). The grant is not payable to customers in receipt of a higher standard rate or miscellaneous expenses rate for requiring constant attendance. |
| j) | Grant to cover costs of Physiotherapist/ Occupational Therapy Service | Actual expenses (only applicable to physiotherapist/occupational therapy service provided by the designated Community Rehabilitation Day Centre and District Support Centre for Persons with Disabilities) |
| k) | Grant to cover costs of Community-based Support Projects for People with Disabilities and Their Families and Enhanced Home and Community Care Services | Actual expenses in general (cost of meals excluded). The grant is normally not payable to customers in receipt of a higher standard rate or miscellaneous expenses rate for requiring constant attendance. |
| (iv) <u>Child-care grants</u> | | |
| a) | Grant to cover fees for attending a child care centre | <p>Group aged 0-2: up to a maximum of \$6,985 per month</p> <p>Group aged 2-3: up to a maximum of \$5,426 per month</p> |
| b) | Grant to cover charges for occasional child care services | Actual expenses (cost of meals excluded) of occasional child care services provided by the designated pre-primary institutions |
| (v) <u>School grants</u> | | |
| a) | Grant to cover school fees | <p>Actual fees except for kindergarten fees of which the maximum levels are :</p> <p>Full-day : \$48,600 per year kindergarten</p> <p>Half-day : \$31,400 per year kindergarten</p> |

- b) Meal allowance for students \$285 per month for students receiving full-day education who have to take lunch away from home
- c) Grant to cover fares to and from school Actual expenses (normally by the cheapest means of available transport)
- d) Grant to cover Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination fee Actual fee
- e) Grant to cover application fee for Joint University Programmes Admissions System Actual fee
- f) Grant for selected items of school related expenses A flat-rate grant is payable to full-time students up to the upper secondary level for selected items of school related expenses (i.e. books, stationery, school uniforms, miscellaneous and minor one-off expenses). The rates for the 2016/17 school year are as follows :

<u>Education level</u>	<u>Full grant per student per school year</u> (\$)
Child Care Centre (Group aged 0-2/ Group aged 2-3)	1,650
Kindergarten (Nursery/Lower/Upper)	3,770
Primary (Primary 1-6)	5,090
Lower secondary (Secondary 1-3)	6,775
Upper secondary (Senior Secondary 1 - 3 (Secondary 4 - 6)/ technical/commercial institutes)	6,000

- Note:
- (1) The grant is normally paid before the commencement of the school year.
 - (2) If the family is eligible for CSSA after the commencement of the school year, the amount of grant payable will be adjusted accordingly.
 - (3) Additional payment can be considered if the actual expenses exceed the amount of the grant paid. Recipients should keep all relevant receipts to prove that the amount of grant paid is insufficient to cover the actual expenses.

(b) Special grants payable to able-bodied adults/children

<u>Types of grant</u>	<u>Payment rate</u>	
	<u>No. of eligible members in the household</u>	<u>Maximum Level per month (\$)</u>
(i) <u>Rent allowance</u>	1	1,810
	2	3,640
	3	4,755
	4	5,060
	5	5,075
	6 or above	6,340

- Note:
- (1) Rent allowance is calculated on the basis of eligible members of a family. The amount to be allowed for rent is the actual rent paid or the MRA appropriate to the number of eligible members in a family, whichever is the less. If recipients residing in public housing receive any rent-free incentives or rent-reduction incentives, the Department will not pay rent allowance or will only pay rent allowance at an amount equal to the actual rent paid after deducting the rent-reduction incentives, up to the appropriate MRA during the incentive period.
 - (2) Rent allowance above the maximum level can be considered to cover the actual rent if the applicant has been waitlisted for compassionate re-housing.
 - (3) For CSSA cases where the household has to pay rent for a PRH flat (including an Interim Housing unit) under HA, the Department will, under normal circumstances, arrange direct bank transfer of the CSSA rent allowance payable to the household to HA's bank account monthly for paying rent (including the license fee) of the PRH flat.

(ii) Water and sewage charge allowance

Amount of allowance depends on the number of persons sharing the water meter

<u>Number of persons sharing the water meter</u>	<u>Amount of allowance per person per month</u> (\$)
1	Nil
2	8.7
3	12.0
4	14.0
5	16.2
6	18.2
7	20.2
8	21.8
9	22.9
10 or above	23.9

[For example, if a family of four is sharing a water meter with six other tenants, the family will be entitled to a water/sewage charge allowance of \$95.6 (\$23.9 x 4) a month.]

(iii) Child-care grants

a) Grant to cover fees for attending a child care centre

Group aged 0-2: up to a maximum of \$6,985 per month

Group aged 2-3: up to a maximum of \$5,426 per month

b) Grant to cover charges for occasional child care services

Actual expenses (cost of meals excluded) of occasional child care services provided by the designated pre-primary institutions

(iv) School grants

a) Grant to cover school fees

Actual fees except for kindergarten fees of which the maximum levels are :

Full-day : \$48,600 per year kindergarten

Half-day : \$31,400 per year kindergarten

b) Meal allowance for students

\$285 per month for students receiving full-day education who have to take lunch away from home

- | | |
|---|---|
| c) Grant to cover fares to and from school | Actual expenses (normally by the cheapest means of available transport) |
| d) Grant to cover Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination fee | Actual fee |
| e) Grant to cover application fee for Joint University Programmes Admissions System | Actual fee |

- f) Grant for selected items of school related expenses
- A flat-rate grant is payable to full-time students up to the upper secondary level for selected items of school related expenses (i.e. books, stationery, school uniforms, miscellaneous and minor one-off expenses). The rates for the 2016/17 school year are as follows :

<u>Education level</u>	<u>Full grant per student per school year</u> (\$)
Child Care Centre (Group aged 0-2/ Group aged 2-3)	1,650
Kindergarten (Nursery/Lower/Upper)	3,770
Primary (Primary 1-6)	5,090
Lower secondary (Secondary 1-3)	6,775
Upper secondary (Senior Secondary 1 – 3 (Secondary 4 – 6)/ technical/commercial institutes)	6,000

- Note: (1) The grant is normally paid before the commencement of the school year.
- (2) If the family is eligible for CSSA after the commencement of the school year, the amount of grant payable will be adjusted accordingly.
- (3) Additional payment can be considered if the actual expenses exceed the amount of the grant paid. Recipients should keep all relevant receipts to prove that the amount of grant paid is insufficient to cover the actual expenses.

- (v) Burial grant Up to a maximum of \$14,500

(c) How to apply for a special grant

It is not possible to go into great detail about each of the special grants listed above. Applicants may contact the staff of the social security field unit for enquiries.

Recipients under different categories can receive special grants on a monthly or one-off basis to meet their personal or family's special needs.

Many of these special grants are paid to meet the actual costs provided that they are reasonable while some others are paid up to the maximum levels set by the Social Welfare Department. It is important that you seek the advice of the responsible staff of the social security field unit before purchasing any of the items covered by these special grants. All applications for reimbursement must be submitted within six months immediately following the date of payment. Applicants, at the same time, are required to submit all relevant receipts as supporting documents to process the claim.

Application for advance payment of special grants can be made upon production of supporting documents, such as a quotation or an official estimate of cost. Under certain circumstances, a verbal confirmation is also acceptable.

Other special grants may be made at the discretion of the Director of Social Welfare under exceptional circumstances on the merits of individual cases.

9. DISREGARDED EARNINGS

The provision of 'disregarded earnings' (DE) under the CSSA Scheme aims to encourage CSSA recipients to find and maintain employment. DE refers to the earnings from employment that are disregarded when assessing the amount of assistance payable to a CSSA recipient.

All categories of recipients in cases which have been on CSSA for not less than two months are eligible for the following DE benefits:

A. Monthly DE

Monthly earnings from employment can be partially disregarded up to a maximum of \$2,500 per month, calculated as follows :

<u>Earnings</u>	<u>Level of disregard</u>	<u>Maximum amount to be disregarded</u>
First \$800	100%	\$800
Next \$3,400	50%	\$1,700
\$4,200 or above	The first \$800 and half of next \$3,400	\$2,500

B. Total disregard of the first month's income from a new job

The first month's income earned by a recipient aged 15 or above from a new job can be totally disregarded on condition that the recipient has not benefited from this provision during the past two years.

10. DISREGARDED TRAINING/RETRAINING ALLOWANCE

In recognition of the additional expenditure incurred in attending training/retraining courses, training/retraining allowance received by a recipient can be disregarded up to a maximum of \$2,420 in the payment month following the receipt of allowance. See examples below:

Example 1 (Monthly payment of training/retraining allowance)

A CSSA recipient attends a training course which lasts for three months and receives a training allowance of \$2,500 at the end of each month for three months. The recipient is entitled to a disregarded amount of \$2,420 in each of the three payment months following the receipt of the allowance. The remaining amount of \$80 for each month is counted as income.

Example 2 (Lump sum payment of training/retraining allowance)

A CSSA recipient receives a lump sum retraining allowance of \$5,000 after completion of a retraining course which lasts for six weeks. The recipient is entitled to a disregarded amount of \$2,420 in the payment month following the receipt of the allowance. The remaining amount of \$2,580 is counted as income.

11. ASSESSMENT OF ASSISTANCE

A. How the amount of assistance payable is assessed

The amount of assistance payable to applicants is worked out according to the following formula:

$$\begin{array}{rcccl} \text{Recognized} & & \text{Assessable} & & \text{Amount of} \\ \text{Needs} & \text{minus} & \text{Income} & = & \text{CSSA payment} \end{array}$$

Recognized needs include the basic and special needs recognized under the CSSA Scheme in terms of various types of payment:

- standard rates
- supplements
- special grants

Assessable income includes earnings from employment and other income (for example, rent collected, contributions from relatives/friends and regular free meals provided by employers) less the amount of earnings or training/re-training allowance that can be disregarded.

B. Examples

A few examples are provided below to illustrate how the amount of assistance payable is calculated.

Example 1

A single applicant aged 60 who has been medically certified to be 100% disabled, lives in a public housing estate. He pays a monthly rent of \$920, monthly telephone charges of \$105 and monthly service charges for emergency alarm system of \$100. He spends \$20 a month on travelling to and from a government clinic for follow-up treatment. He has no income. The amount of monthly assistance payable to him is :

	(\$)
<u>Recognized needs :</u>	
Standard rate	4,155
Community living supplement	325
Transport supplement	270
Special grants for	
rent	920
telephone charges	105
service charges for emergency alarm system	100
fares to and from clinic	20
Total :	5,895
 Minus	
<u>Assessable income :</u>	NIL
 = Assistance payable	5,895

(Note : An annual long-term supplement of \$2,150 is payable when the applicant has received assistance continuously for 12 months or more. Where the need arises, additional special grants are payable to meet other special needs of the applicant, for example, the costs of spectacles and dentures.)

Example 2

A single elderly applicant aged 60 who lives in a public housing estate pays a monthly rent of \$1,150 and monthly fees for basic plan of mobile phone service of \$65. Every Sunday he works half day for a nearby restaurant as a casual helper and earns a monthly income of \$800.

(A) The amount of monthly assistance payable to him in the first 2 months of receipt of CSSA is :

	(\$)
<u>Recognized needs :</u>	
Standard rate	3,435
Community living supplement	325
Special grants for	
rent	1,150
telephone charges	65
Total :	<u>4,975</u>
 Minus	
<u>Assessable income :</u>	
\$800	800
= Assistance payable	<u><u>4,175</u></u>

(B) The amount of monthly assistance payable to him starting from the 3rd month is :

	(\$)
<u>Recognized needs :</u>	
Standard rate	3,435
Community living supplement	325
Special grants for	
rent	1,150
telephone charges	65
Total :	<u>4,975</u>
 Minus	
<u>Assessable income :</u>	
\$800 (totally disregarded)*	0
* income disregarded:	
The first \$800 of the applicant's monthly income is totally disregarded.	
= Assistance payable	<u><u>4,975</u></u>

(Note : An annual long-term supplement of \$2,150 is payable when the applicant has received assistance continuously for 12 months or more. Where the need arises, additional special grants are payable to meet other special needs of the applicant, for example, the costs of spectacles and dentures.)

Example 3 : Part A

A 3-member single-parent family comprises the mother and two children aged 14 and 12 respectively. The mother is a full-time housewife. The two children attend full-day secondary school and take lunch away from home. Monthly expenses of the family include rent of \$3,200, water and sewage charges and fares to and from school of \$450 for the two children. The amount of monthly assistance payable to this incomeless family is :

	<u>(\$)</u>
<u>Recognized needs :</u>	
Standard rates	
(for 1 single parent and 2 able-bodied children in the family : \$2,375 + \$2,165×2)	6,705
Single parent supplement	340
Special grants for	
rent	3,200
water and sewage charges	36
meal allowance for the students	570
travelling expenses to and from school	450
= Assistance payable	<hr/> <u>11,301</u>

Example 3 : Part B

After relying on CSSA for 1 year, the single parent decides to take up a part-time cleansing job in the morning with a monthly wage of \$1,848 since her two children are attending full-day secondary school. As her first month's income earned from a new job can be totally disregarded, the first month's salary received by her does not affect the amount of assistance payable to the family (i.e. \$11,301). The total monthly income of the family starting from the following month is :

	<u>(\$)</u>
<u>Recognized needs :</u>	
Standard rates	
(for 1 single parent and 2 able-bodied children in the family : \$2,375 + \$2,165×2)	6,705
Single parent supplement	340
Special grants for	
rent	3,200
water and sewage charges	36
meal allowance for the students	570
travelling expenses to and from school	450
Total :	<u>11,301</u>

Minus

<u>Assessable income :</u>	
\$1,848 - \$1,324 (income disregarded)*	524
* income disregarded :	
\$800 + (\$1,848 - \$800) ÷ 2 = \$1,324	
When assessing an applicant's income, the first \$800 and half of the next \$3,400 of the monthly income can be disregarded.	
The monthly income of the applicant is \$1,848. The first \$800 and half of the remaining \$1,048 is disregarded.	
= Assistance payable	10,777

Total family income = Earnings from employment + CSSA payment (i.e. \$1,848 + \$10,777)	<u><u>12,625</u></u>
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(Note : The children in the family are also eligible for an annual flat-rate grant for selected items of school related expenses.)

Example 4 : Part A

A 4-member family comprises the unemployed able-bodied applicant, his wife who is a homemaker, and two children aged 16 and 7 respectively. The elder child is a full-day higher secondary school student and needs to take lunch away from home while the younger child is studying in a half-day primary school. Monthly expenses of the family include rent of \$3,500, water and sewage charges and fares to and from school of \$400 for the two children. The amount of monthly assistance payable to this incomeless family is :

	(\$)
<u>Recognized needs :</u>	
Standard rates	7,710
(for an able-bodied adult, a family-carer and 2 able-bodied children : \$1,735 + \$2,105 + \$1,935 x 2)	
Special grants for	
rent	3,500
water and sewage charges	56
meal allowance for the student	285
travelling expenses to and from school	400
= Assistance payable	<u>11,951</u>

Example 4 : Part B

After relying on CSSA for half a year, the applicant finds a full-time delivery job with a monthly salary of \$5,000. Since his first month's income earned from a new job can be totally disregarded, the first month's salary received by him does not affect the amount of assistance payable to the family (i.e. \$11,951). The total monthly income of the family starting from the following month is :

	(\$)
<u>Recognized needs :</u>	
Standard rates	7,710
(for an able-bodied adult, a family-carer and 2 able-bodied children : \$1,735 + \$2,105 + \$1,935 x 2)	
Special grants for	
rent	3,500
water and sewage charges	56
meal allowance for the student	285
travelling expenses to and from school	400
Total :	<u>11,951</u>

Minus

<u>Assessable income :</u>	
\$5,000 - \$2,500 (income disregarded)*	2,500

* income disregarded :

As the monthly income of the applicant is more than \$4,200, the maximum amount to be disregarded is \$2,500 in calculating the income.

= Assistance payable	9,451
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Total family income = Earnings from employment + CSSA payment (i.e. \$5,000 + \$9,451)	<u><u>14,451</u></u>
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(Note : The children in the family are also eligible for an annual flat-rate grant for selected items of school related expenses.)

Example 5

A 5-member family comprises the unemployed able-bodied applicant, his wife who is a family-carer, his elderly mother-in-law, his 21-year-old son who is medically certified to be suffering from carcinoma and in need of special diet and his 13-year-old daughter who is a full time junior secondary student and has to take lunch away from home. Monthly expenses of the family include rent of \$1,810, telephone charges of \$105, the son's fares to and from clinic of \$150, the daughter's fares to and from school of \$280 and stoma bags of \$200 for the son. In addition, the family has to pay water and sewage charges. The amount of monthly assistance payable to the family is:

	(\$)
<u>Recognized needs :</u>	
Standard rates	12,970
(for an able-bodied adult, a family-carer, an elderly member, an ill-health adult and an able-bodied child : \$1,950 + \$2,375 + \$3,240 + \$3,240 + \$2,165)	
Community living supplement	650
Special grants for	
rent	1,810
water and sewage charges	81
special diet (carcinoma)	1,080
meal allowance for the student	285
telephone charges	105
travelling expenses to and from school	280
travelling expenses to and from clinic	150
stoma bags	200
	<hr/>
Total :	17,611
 Minus	
 <u>Assessable income</u>	 NIL
 = Assistance payable	 <u><u>17,611</u></u>

(Note : An annual long-term supplement of \$4,300 is payable to the elderly family member and the son suffering from carcinoma when they have received assistance continuously for 12 months or more. Where the need arises, additional special grants are payable to meet their special needs. In addition, the student in the family is also eligible for an annual flat-rate grant for selected items of school related expenses.)

12. PERMISSIBLE LIMITS OF ABSENCE FROM HONG KONG DURING RECEIPT OF ASSISTANCE

A recipient's temporary absences from Hong Kong will not affect the amount of assistance payable on condition that the total number of days of absence in a payment year (which is counted from 1 July to 30 June of the following year) does not exceed the permissible limit as follows :

- A. Recipients aged 60 or above or recipients medically certified to be disabled : 180 days per year
- B. Other recipients : 60 days per year (If there are special reasons why these recipients have to leave Hong Kong for more than 60 days in a year, the permissible limit of absence from Hong Kong can be extended up to a maximum of 90 days at the discretion of the Director of Social Welfare.)

Note: Consideration can be given to disregarding a recipient's absence from Hong Kong arising from paid employment outside Hong Kong on condition that there is documentary evidence to prove that the working hours are no less than 120 per month and earnings are no less than \$2,160 per month.

13. PORTABLE COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE (PCSSA) SCHEME FOR ELDERLY PERSONS RETIRING TO GUANGDONG AND FUJIAN

The PCSSA Scheme aims to provide cash assistance to eligible elderly CSSA recipients who choose to take up permanent residence in Guangdong or Fujian.

A. Eligibility

To be eligible for PCSSA, a person must, in addition to satisfying the means test under the CSSA Scheme :

- (a) be a Hong Kong permanent resident and have lived in Hong Kong for at least seven years;
- (b) be aged 60 or above; and
- (c) have received CSSA continuously for at least one year immediately before the date of application for PCSSA (breaks in payment totalling not more than 10 days within this one-year period are allowed).

The applicant is required to declare the scheduled date of his/her departure from Hong Kong to take up permanent residence in Guangdong or Fujian, which must fall within three months of the date of application for PCSSA.

If the applicant is a public housing tenant, he/she must also surrender his/her public housing unit or delete his/her name from the tenancy in order to qualify for PCSSA.

B. Amount of assistance

An applicant eligible for PCSSA will be entitled to the monthly standard rate and the annual long-term supplement. No special grants or other payments (such as rent allowance, special diet allowance, travelling expenses) will be made to a PCSSA recipient.

In case of the death of a PCSSA recipient, a burial grant to meet the burial and related expenses can be made to the deceased recipient's relative or friend who is responsible for the burial arrangements on a reimbursement basis. The application must be made within six months of the date of death of the recipient. In cases where a Chinese resident in Guangdong or Fujian applies for the burial grant, the application will be processed by the Social Welfare Department's agent.

C. Application

All application procedures are processed in Hong Kong. An elderly CSSA recipient may apply for PCSSA in person at the social security field unit which handles his/her CSSA case. If he/she has a mobility problem, he/she can apply by phone or by post so that a home visit can be arranged.

D. Method of Payment

PCSSA payment will be credited to the successful applicant's Hong Kong bank account monthly. He/She is required to make his/her own arrangements to collect PCSSA payments from that account (for example, he/she can make arrangements with the bank to remit the payments to him/her in Guangdong or Fujian). Any expenses thus incurred have to be borne by him/her.

E. More information

For more detailed information, please refer to the pamphlet 'Notice to Applicants for PCSSA' (only Chinese version is available), which is available at any social security field unit.

14. WAIVER OF MEDICAL CHARGES

All CSSA recipients are entitled to free medical treatment at public hospitals (including the Accident & Emergency Department) or clinics in Hong Kong.

Each eligible applicant is given a “Certificate of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Recipients (for Medical Waivers)” which contains the particulars of the applicant and other eligible members of the family, if any. With this Medical Waiver, the recipients can apply for waiving of medical charges at a public hospital or clinic.

On seeking medical treatment, the recipients can produce the Medical Waiver upon registration for out-patient treatment or admission to a hospital, and ask the staff of the hospital or clinic to help apply for waiving of medical charges.

If the recipient needs to seek medical treatment but has not yet received the Medical Waiver, he/she may approach the social security field unit concerned or the medical social worker (if there is one in that hospital or clinic) for assistance.

15. APPEAL PROCEDURES

An applicant may lodge an appeal at the Social Security Appeal Board if he/she disagrees with a decision made by the Social Welfare Department on any of the following matters:

- (a) the refusal of any payment;
- (b) the amount of payment offered;
- (c) the date from which payment was offered; and
- (d) the issue of payment to a person other than the applicant.

The Social Security Appeal Board is an independent body comprising non-officials appointed by the Chief Executive. If an applicant wants to make an appeal against a decision of the Social Welfare Department, it is important that he/she must lodge it within four weeks immediately following the date of notification of the decision from the Director of Social Welfare. The decision of the Board is final and the appellant has no further right of appeal.

The applicant can lodge an appeal at the social security field unit concerned, the Social Welfare Department's Headquarters or the Social Security Appeal Board office.

16. COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

We are committed to providing applicants with a polite, helpful and efficient service.

If an applicant is not satisfied with the work of the social security field unit, or the attitude of its staff, he/she can ask to see the Supervisor of the social security field unit, or alternatively lodge a complaint with the District Social Welfare Officer. The name and contact telephone number of the District Social Welfare Officer are displayed at the reception area of the social security field unit.

All complaints, whether written or oral, will be dealt with expeditiously and impartially.

17. OTHER WELFARE SERVICES

If an applicant is in need of other welfare services (for example, residential placements or counselling services), please let staff of the social security field unit know. We will render every possible assistance as appropriate. Where necessary, referrals will be made to other service units or government departments for appropriate services.

18. NOTICE TO APPLICANTS/GUARDIANS/APPOINTEES

A. Report of changes in circumstances

Any changes in the circumstances of a CSSA applicant or his/her family member(s) may affect his/her CSSA entitlements. Therefore, the applicant or his/her guardian/appointee should report immediately to the concerned Social Security Field Unit of the Social Welfare Department whenever there is a change in the information that has already been provided to the Department, such information includes :

1. change in employment (including taking up employment/self-employment, change/termination of job) or change in income;
2. change in financial resources (e.g. receipt of or increase/decrease in the amount of maintenance payment from divorce settlement/contribution from relatives or friends/pension/bonus/double pay/training or retraining allowance/compensation/charitable funds/benefit payments from insurance policy, etc.);
3. total value of assets exceeding the prescribed limit;
4. change in schooling conditions (including commencement of schooling, change of school, cease schooling);
5. change in family conditions (e.g. home removal, increase or decrease in the number of family members, change in marital status, etc.);
6. change in family expenditure (e.g. increase or decrease in rental expenses/school fees/fares to and from school, etc.);
7. absence from Hong Kong exceeding the permissible limits;
8. admission to or discharge from any residential institution, such as a hospital, residential care home for the elderly, nursing home, residential home for people with disabilities, half-way house, boarding school, drug dependent persons treatment centre or refuge centre for women; or
9. detention or imprisonment, etc.

B. Direct Rent Payment Arrangements to HA

For CSSA cases where the household has to pay rent for a PRH flat (including an Interim Housing unit) under HA, the Department will, under normal circumstances, arrange direct bank transfer of the CSSA rent allowance payable to the household to HA's bank account monthly for paying rent (including the license fee) of the PRH flat.

If in future the Department has to recover or reduce the amount of rent allowance already paid to HA, under normal circumstances, the applicant or his/her guardian/appointee should be responsible for repaying the overpaid amount to the Department.

Rent allowance is calculated on the basis of eligible members of a family. The amount to be allowed for rent is the actual rent paid or the MRA appropriate to the number of eligible members in a family, whichever is the less. If recipients residing in public housing receive any rent-free incentives or rent-reduction incentives, the Department will not pay rent allowance or will only pay rent allowance at an amount equal to the actual rent paid after deducting the rent-reduction incentives, up to the appropriate MRA during the incentive period.

C. Data matching mechanism and targeted checks

In the process of investigating CSSA cases, the Department will make detailed verification of the information provided by the applicant or his/her guardian/appointee. In addition, the Department conducts data matching periodically/on need basis with other government departments, banks and related organizations (including the Immigration Department, Treasury, Labour Department, Correctional Services Department, Land Registry, Companies Registry, Transport Department, Student Finance Office of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency, Hospital Authority, the Employees Retraining Board and Education Bureau, etc.) to cross-check the information given by the applicant or his/her guardian/appointee. Furthermore, the Inland Revenue Department also requests CSSA recipients' information from the Department to cross-check relevant information provided by tax payers. The Department also conducts reviews on targeted CSSA cases through different means including home visits. The applicant or his/her guardian/appointee should cooperate fully with the officers of the Department.

D. Information provided must be true, correct and complete

The information provided by the applicant or his/her guardian/appointee must be true, correct and complete. A person who knowingly or wilfully provides false statement or withholds any information in order to obtain assistance by deception commits a criminal offence. He/She is also breaking the law if he/she has the deliberate intention of not reporting the changes of given information which may cause a reduction of the amount of assistance payable or disqualification for CSSA. The applicant or his/her guardian/appointee may be liable to prosecution. Furthermore, any overpaid assistance must be refunded to the Department.

To obtain CSSA by deception is a criminal offence. In addition to the consequence of being ineligible for CSSA, the applicant or the guardian/appointee is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a maximum of 14 years under the Theft Ordinance (Cap. 210 of the Laws of Hong Kong).

19. REPORTING SUSPECTED FRAUD AND ABUSE CASES

The CSSA Scheme provides a safety net for those who are in genuine financial difficulties. We will do our best to guard against fraud and abuse of CSSA.

Our Fraud Investigation Teams are responsible for investigating suspected fraud cases. All fraudsters may be liable to prosecution.

If you have any information on any person suspected to have obtained CSSA by deception, please:

- report to our Social Security Field Units;
- call the Report Fraud Hotline at 2332 0101;
- complete the “Information Form on Fraudulent Claims for CSSA” and send it by post or by fax (fax no. 2718 8595) to us. The Information Form is available at Social Security Field Units, Integrated Family Service Centres, estate offices of the Housing Department or district offices of the Home Affairs Department; or
- email to us at icfit1@swd.gov.hk or icfit2@swd.gov.hk.

Upon receipt of your report, the Department will take follow-up action according to the information provided. There is no need for you to make a duplicate report unless you have supplementary information to provide in respect of the suspected fraud case.

Rigorous safeguards are built into the procedures of handling reports to ensure that informants' identity and information provided by informants are treated in strict confidence. Unless the report involves suspected criminal offences, which the Department must refer to relevant law enforcement agencies, only case officers or designated officers have access to the information on a 'need-to-know' basis.

20. Enquiries

For further information about the CSSA Scheme, please visit our Departmental Homepage at <http://www.swd.gov.hk>. Enquiries about the CSSA Scheme may be made to the Departmental Hotline Service Unit (Telephone no. 2343 2255, Fax no. 2763 5874) or the nearest social security field unit.