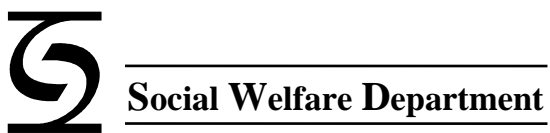


**A GUIDE
TO
COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE
(Internet Version)**



(April 2024)

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COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE**

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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:

<https://www.swd.gov.hk/en/pubsvc/socsecu/comprehens/cssa/>

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 and 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 policies, pre-surrender/surrender value of annuity schemes, 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	35,500
Child, elderly person, disabled person or person medically certified to be in ill-health	53,000

(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	23,500	1	53,000
2	47,000	2	79,500
3	70,500	3	106,000
4 or above	94,000	4	132,500
		5	159,000
		6	185,500

[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 \$173,500 (i.e. \$94,000 + \$79,500).]

b) Cases involving no able-bodied adult

No. of family members#	Asset limit (\$)
2	79,500
3	106,000
4	132,500
5	159,000
6	185,500

(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, or where there is no able-bodied adult aged below 50.
- (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/retraining 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 to 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 (the 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 \$2,630 per month and working not less than 120 hours per month; or
- (c) in the case of being unemployed or earning less than \$2,630 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 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 assist the following able-bodied CSSA applicants / recipients aged 15 to 64[#] to secure employment to move towards self-reliance while providing them with financial assistance:

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

[#]Able-bodied CSSA adults aged 60 to 64 may participate in the SFS Scheme on a voluntary basis and will not be subject to sanction if they do not join the scheme.

The scheme comprises the Employment Support Services and the arrangement of Disregarded Earnings.

A. Employment Support Services (EmSS)

The Department has commissioned non-governmental organizations (operating agencies) to operate the EmSS with a view to assisting able-bodied CSSA applicants / recipients to overcome work barriers and enhance their employability so that they can find paid employment^{##} as soon as possible through the provision of integrated employment support services on a family basis. The services include:

- to provide unemployed CSSA applicants / recipients and single parents and child carers on CSSA with their youngest child aged 12 to 14 with employment support services, including information on labour market / job vacancies / retraining courses, regular interviews to help them develop action plans to find employment, arranging job matching, etc.;
- to strengthen support for the aforesaid service recipients through social work service;
- to assess the needs of the aforesaid service recipients and provide them with tailor-made and focussed employment support services;
- to provide information on child care to single parents and child carers on CSSA whose youngest child is aged 12 to 14; and
- to provide post-employment support services for at least three months to assist the aforesaid service recipients who have secured employment to sustain employment.

^{##} For those unemployed CSSA applicants / recipients aged 15 to 59 who are working no less than 120 hours per month with earnings no less than the prescribed level set by the Department, or those able-bodied CSSA adults aged 60 to 64 who are working no less than 60 hours per month, as well as those single parents and child carers on CSSA

with their youngest child aged 12 to 14 who are working no less than 32 hours per month, they need not to participate in the SFS Scheme.

Able-bodied CSSA applicants / recipients have the obligations to actively find and sustain employment and are required to receive the employment support services provided by the operating agencies.

B. Disregarded Earnings (DE)

With the objective of encouraging CSSA recipients to secure and sustain employment, there is a provision of DE under the CSSA Scheme (please see Section 9 for details).

Related Undertaking

Once an applicant / a recipient aged 15 to 59 enrolls 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 / recipient aged 15 to 59 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 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 Department will deduct \$200 per month from the CSSA payment of the single parents and child carers aged 15 to 59 on CSSA with their youngest child aged 12 to 14.

Other Information

A leaflet on this scheme can be obtained from the 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, by online form or in person. An application may also be made through a referral to the Department by another government department or a non-governmental organization. Upon receipt of an application, staff of the 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. Person unable to make application by himself/herself

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 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 within a year prior to the date of application)
(such as bank passbooks and bank statements showing the balance for the past year, time deposit receipts, insurance policy statements (including all types of policies where the applicant and his/her family members are the policy owner, policy insured or beneficiary), documentary proofs of annuity schemes, 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 (with printed copy of e-Visa, if applicable)

(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.);
- Follow-up appointment slips in public hospitals/clinics (if applicable);
- Proofs of financial relationship with other family members (including parents and siblings); or
- Other relevant documents as required by the Department.

Where necessary, the Department will make enquiries to the Director of Health/Chief Executive of Hospital Authority for medical reports, or to the employer/ex-employer of the applicant and his/her family members 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 Department, he/she has the right to lodge an appeal with the Social Security Appeal Board (please see Section 16 for the appeal procedures).

B. Method of payment

CSSA payment is usually credited to the applicant's/guardian's/appointee's designated bank account in Hong Kong (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 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 to 59 are required to participate in the SFS Scheme as a condition of receiving assistance [please see Section 3C(c)]. 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 65 or above</u>				
Able-bodied/50% disabled	4,195	3,945		
100% disabled	5,065	4,480		
Requiring constant attendance	7,130	6,535		
<u>Ill-health/Disabled adult aged under 65</u>				
Ill-health/50% disabled	4,195	3,945		
100% disabled	5,065	4,480		
Requiring constant attendance	7,130	6,535		
<u>Disabled child</u>				
50% disabled	4,715	4,100		
100% disabled	5,590	5,000		
Requiring constant attendance	7,645	7,055		
		In a family comprising not more than 2 able-bodied adults/ <u>children</u>	In a family comprising 3 able-bodied adults/ <u>children</u>	In a family comprising 4 or more able-bodied adults/ <u>children</u>
	<u>Single person</u>			
<u>Able-bodied adult aged under 65</u>				
Single parent/Family carer	—	3,200	2,900	2,565
Other adult	2,950	2,630	2,370	2,120
<u>Able-bodied child</u>	3,555	2,940	2,635	2,355

[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)
- 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	2,620
Family with 2 or more such eligible members	5,235

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

(b) Single parent supplement

A monthly supplement of \$420 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 \$400 is payable to recipients who are old, disabled, medically certified to be in ill-health or able-bodied adults aged 60 to 64 and who are not living in institutions to better support their stay in the community.

(d) Transport supplement

A monthly transport supplement of \$335 is payable to severely disabled persons who are medically certified to be 100% disabled or in need of 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 \$400 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.

(f) Employment support supplement

A monthly employment support supplement of \$1,245 is payable to able-bodied adult recipients aged between 60 and 64 to encourage them to join the labour market and remain in employment.

C. Special grants

Recipients under different categories can apply for special grants on a monthly, yearly or one-off basis to meet their personal or family's special needs. Some special grants are only payable to eligible elderly persons/disabled persons/persons medically certified to be in ill-health/single parent families/children (please see Notes below for details). Special grants can be broadly classified into five categories as below:

(a) Housing and related grants

<u>Types of grant</u>	<u>Payment rate</u>	
i) Rent allowance	<u>No. of eligible members in the household</u>	<u>Maximum level per month (\$)</u>
	1	2,515
	2	4,440
	3	5,330
	4	6,005
	5	6,695
	6 or above	7,800

- 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 maximum rent allowance (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 or a subvented elderly residential institution (not applicable to those residing in a private elderly residential institution).
- (3) For CSSA cases where the household has to pay rent for a public rental housing (PRH) flat (including an Interim Housing unit) under the Hong Kong Housing Authority (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	9.0
3	12.5
4	14.5
5	16.7
6	18.7
7	20.8
8	22.4
9	23.5
10 or above	24.5

[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 \$98 (\$24.5 x 4) a month.]

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| iii) | Grant for rent deposit | Up to two times of the appropriate maximum rent allowance |
| iv) | Grant for water, electricity and gas/ liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) deposits for accommodation in public rental housing or private housing | Actual expenses |
| v) | Domestic removal grant ^{Note 1} | <p><u>Public housing estate or interim housing</u></p> <p>From \$10,030 up to a maximum of \$31,910 depending on the number of eligible members to cover removal cost, basic fitting out expenses and telephone installation fees</p> <p><u>Private housing</u></p> <p>From \$2,267 up to a maximum of \$6,982 depending on the number of eligible members</p> <p><u>Housing for Senior Citizens</u></p> <p>Single person : \$10,030
Couple : \$17,300
(The grant covers the costs of removal, telephone installation and essential household items in connection with the removal.)</p> <p><u>Institutions for the elderly or residential care homes for persons with disabilities</u></p> <p>\$1,134</p> |

Note 1: Only applicable to single parent families/elderly persons/disabled persons/ persons medically certified to be in ill-health.

vi) Telephone-related grant^{Note 2} Telephone-related grant is payable on a flat-rate basis according to the number of eligible members in a household to cover expenses related to telephone services (e.g. renting a residential telephone line and telephone set, mobile phone service and mobile data services etc.). The rates are as follows:

<u>Number of eligible members in the household</u>	<u>Amount of grant per household per month (\$)</u>
1	130
2	240
3 or above	330

vii) Grant for emergency alarm system^{Note 3} 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

viii) Grant for renewal of electrical fittings Actual expenses

(b) Family grants

i) Grant to cover fares to and from hospital/clinic and other essential travelling expenses^{Note 4} Actual expenses (usually by the cheapest means of available transport)

ii) Burial grant Up to a maximum of \$17,180

Note 2: Only applicable to persons who are aged 18 or above and who are not residing in any residential institution. Application for this grant is not necessary.

Note 3: Only applicable to persons aged 65 or above; or persons aged 60 to 64 certified to be more than 50% disabled or suffering from such medical conditions which, in the opinion of a doctor of a public hospital or clinic, may develop into life threatening conditions and require immediate attention. For payment of related telephone charges, please see 'Telephone-related grant' under item (a)(vi).

Note 4: Only applicable to elderly persons/disabled persons/persons medically certified to be in ill-health.

(c) Medical and rehabilitation grants

- i) Grant to cover costs of glasses
- Up to a maximum of \$665 per pair of glasses (normally, the special grant is given to cover the cost of only one pair of glasses within 24 months)
- ii) Grant to cover costs of dental treatment (tooth extraction, dentures, crowns, bridges, post, post and core, scaling and polishing, fillings and root canal treatment)
- The recipient should first approach one of the dental clinics designated by the Department where he/she seeks dental treatment for cost estimation. The amount of the grant payable is:
- The actual expenses for receiving treatment at the designated dental clinic or the ceiling amount of the dental treatment item set by the Department, whichever is the less.
- (After the recipient has approached one of the designated clinics for an estimate of cost, he/she is free to turn to a registered dentist of a non-designated clinic for the same service. A grant will be paid to meet the cost estimated by the designated clinic, or the cost charged by the non-designated clinic, or the ceiling amount set by the Department, whichever is the less.)
- iii) 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 : \$1,310 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: \$690 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.

- | | |
|--|---|
| iv) Grant to cover costs of medical, rehabilitation, surgical appliances and hygienic items (e.g. wheelchair, hearing aid, stoma bags, disposable diapers) ^{Note 4} | Actual expenses subject to medical recommendation from a doctor, an occupational therapist or a physiotherapist of a public hospital or clinic (where appropriate, the recommendation made by an occupational therapist or a physiotherapist of the Department/a non-governmental organisation receiving subvention allocations from the Department is also acceptable) |
| v) Care and attention allowance ^{Note 5} | Actual expenses subject to medical certification and a social worker's recommendation |
| vi) Grant to cover the charge for residential respite service ^{Note 6} | Actual fees charged less a portion of the standard rate |
| vii) Grant to cover the medical examination fee for admission to a subvented residential institution ^{Note 4} | Actual fees |

Note 4: Only applicable to elderly persons/disabled persons/persons medically certified to be in ill-health.

Note 5: Only applicable to disabled persons.

Note 6: Only applicable to elderly persons/disabled persons.

viii) Grant to cover the annual medical examination fee for elderly recipients in residential care homes for the elderly and residential care homes for persons with disabilities

Up to a maximum of \$200

ix) Grant to cover fees for community support services for the elderly (including physiotherapy/occupational therapy service) ^{Note 7}

Actual service fees (cost of meals excluded). The grant is not payable to customers in receipt of a standard rate or miscellaneous expenses rate for being in need of constant attendance.

x) Grant to cover fees for community support services for persons with disabilities (including physiotherapy/occupational therapy service) ^{Note 4}

Actual expenses in general (cost of meals excluded). The grant is normally not payable to customers in receipt of a standard rate or miscellaneous expenses rate for being in need of constant attendance.

(d) Child-care grants

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

Group aged 0-2: up to a maximum of \$6,720 per month

Group aged 2-3: up to a maximum of \$6,802 per month

ii) 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

Note 4: Only applicable to elderly persons/disabled persons/persons medically certified to be in ill-health.

Note 7: Only applicable to elderly persons/persons aged 60 or above who are able-bodied/disabled/medically certified to be in ill-health.

(e) School grants

- i) Grant to cover school fees
- Actual fees except for kindergarten fees of which the maximum levels are:
- | | <u>Half-day
per school
year</u> | <u>Full-day
per school
year</u> |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| The Kindergarten Education Scheme | \$11,280 | \$29,330 |
- ii) Meal allowance for students
- \$350 per month for students receiving full-day education who have to take lunch away from home
- iii) Grant to cover fares to and from school
- Actual expenses (normally by the cheapest means of available transport)
- iv) Grant to cover Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination fee
- Actual fee
- v) Grant to cover application fee for Joint University Programmes Admissions System
- Actual fee
- vi) 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 2023/24 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)	1,910

Kindergarten (Nursery/Lower/Upper)	4,370
Primary (Primary 1-6)	5,905
Lower secondary (Secondary 1-3)	7,840
Upper secondary (Senior Secondary 1 - 3 (Secondary 4 - 6)/ technical/commercial institutes)	6,945

- 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.

How to apply for a special grant

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

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 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 or arranging any of the services 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 \$4,000 per month, calculated as follows:

<u>Earnings</u>	<u>Level of disregard</u>	<u>Maximum amount to be disregarded</u>
First \$1,200	100%	\$1,200
Next \$5,600	50%	\$2,800
\$6,800 or above	The first \$1,200 and half of next \$5,600	\$4,000

B. Total disregard of maximum the first two months’ income from a new job

A maximum of the first two months’ 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 \$2,950 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 \$3,000 at the end of each month for three months. The recipient is entitled to a disregarded amount of \$2,950 in each of the three payment months following the receipt of the allowance. The remaining amount of \$50 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 \$2,950 in the payment month following the receipt of the allowance. The remaining amount of \$2,050 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 65 who has been medically certified to be 100% disabled, lives in a public housing estate. He pays a monthly rent of \$920 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	5,065
Community living supplement	400
Special grants for	
rent	920
telephone-related grant	130
service charges for emergency alarm system	100
fares to and from clinic	20
Total :	<u>6,635</u>
 Minus	
<u>Assessable income:</u>	NIL
 = Assistance payable	 <u><u>6,635</u></u>

(Note : An annual long-term supplement of \$2,620 is payable when the applicant has received assistance continuously for 12 months or more.)

* Where necessary, the applicant may apply for other special grants; if the applicant fulfils the eligibility criteria, other special grants are payable to meet his/her special needs.

Example 2

A single elderly applicant aged 65 living in a public housing estate applies for CSSA. He pays a monthly rent of \$1,150 and every Sunday works half day for a nearby restaurant as a casual helper as well as earns a monthly income of \$1,200.

(A) In the first 2 months of the applicant's receipt of CSSA[#], the amount of monthly assistance payable to the applicant is:

	(\$)
<u>Recognized needs:</u>	
Standard rate	4,195
Community living supplement	400
Special grants for	
rent	1,150
telephone-related grant	130
Total :	<u>5,875</u>
 Minus	
<u>Assessable income:</u>	
\$1,200	1,200
= Assistance payable	<u><u>4,675</u></u>

[#] The applicant is in a new case which has been on CSSA for less than two months. Therefore, he is not eligible for the disregarded earnings benefits.

(B) Starting from the third month, the applicant's case has been on CSSA for not less than two months. Therefore, his monthly earnings of \$1,200 from employment can be totally disregarded. The amount of monthly assistance payable to him is:

	(\$)
<u>Recognized needs:</u>	
Standard rate	4,195
Community living supplement	400
Special grants for	
rent	1,150
telephone-related grant	130
Total :	<u>5,875</u>

Minus

Assessable income:

\$1,200 (totally disregarded)* 0

* income disregarded:

The first \$1,200 of the applicant's monthly income is totally disregarded.

= Assistance payable 5,875

(Note : An annual long-term supplement of \$2,620 is payable when the applicant has received assistance continuously for 12 months or more.)

Example 3 : Part A

A 3-member single-parent family comprises the mother aged 40 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 \$4,000, 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: \$2,900 + \$2,635×2)	8,170.0
Single parent supplement	420.0
Special grants for	
rent	4,000.0
water and sewage charges	37.5
telephone-related grant	130.0
meal allowance for the students	700.0
travelling expenses to and from school	450.0
= Assistance payable	<u>13,908</u>

(rounded up to the nearest dollar)

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 \$3,500 since her two children are attending full-day secondary school. As a maximum of her first two months' income earned from a new job can be totally disregarded, the first two months' salary received by her does not affect the amount of assistance payable to the family (i.e. \$13,908). The total monthly income of the family starting from the third month is:

	(\$)
<u>Recognized needs:</u>	
Standard rates	
(for 1 single parent and 2 able-bodied children in the family: \$2,900 + \$2,635×2)	8,170.0
Single parent supplement	420.0
Special grants for	
rent	4,000.0
water and sewage charges	37.5
telephone-related grant	130.0
meal allowance for the students	700.0
travelling expenses to and from school	450.0
Total :	13,907.5

Minus

Assessable income:

\$3,500 - \$2,350 (income disregarded)* 1,150.0

* income disregarded:

$$\$1,200 + (\$3,500 - \$1,200) \div 2 = \$2,350$$

When assessing an applicant's income, the first \$1,200 and half of the next \$5,600 of the monthly income can be disregarded.

The monthly income of the applicant is \$3,500. The first \$1,200 and half of the remaining \$2,300 is disregarded.

= Assistance payable 12,758
(rounded up to the nearest dollar)

Total family income = Earnings from employment + CSSA 16,258
payment (i.e. \$3,500 + \$12,758)

(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 aged 48, his 40-year-old wife who is a homemaker, and two children aged 16 and 7 respectively. The elder child is a full-day higher secondary school student while the younger child is studying in a full-day primary school. Both of them need to take lunch away from home. Monthly expenses of the family include rent of \$4,500, 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>(\$)</u>
<u>Recognized needs:</u>	
Standard rates	9,395
(for an able-bodied adult, a family-carer and 2 able-bodied children : \$2,120 + \$2,565 + \$2,355 x 2)	
Special grants for	
rent	4,500
water and sewage charges	58
telephone-related grant	240
meal allowance for the student	700
travelling expenses to and from school	400
= Assistance payable	<hr/> <u>15,293</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 \$9,000. Since a maximum of his first two months' income earned from a new job can be totally disregarded, the first two months' salary received by him does not affect the amount of assistance payable to the family (i.e. \$15,293). The total monthly income of the family starting from the third month is:

	(\$)
<u>Recognized needs:</u>	
Standard rates	9,395
(for an able-bodied adult, a family-carer and 2 able-bodied children : \$2,120 + \$2,565 + \$2,355 x 2)	
Special grants for	
rent	4,500
water and sewage charges	58
telephone-related grant	240
meal allowance for the student	700
travelling expenses to and from school	400
Total :	<u>15,293</u>

Minus

Assessable income:
\$9,000 - \$4,000 (income disregarded)* 5,000

* income disregarded:

As the monthly income of the applicant is more than \$6,800, the maximum amount to be disregarded is \$4,000 in calculating the income.

= Assistance payable 10,293

Total family income = Earnings from employment + CSSA 19,293
payment (i.e. \$9,000 + \$10,293)

(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 aged 50, his 45-year-old 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 \$6,600, 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:

(\$)

Recognized needs:

Standard rates 15,795.0

(for an able-bodied adult, a family-carer, an elderly member,
an ill-health adult and an able-bodied child : \$2,370 + \$2,900
+ \$3,945 + \$3,945 + \$2,635)

Community living supplement 800.0
(for an elderly member and an ill-health adult)

Special grants for

rent	6,600.0
water and sewage charges	83.5
telephone-related grant	330.0
special diet (carcinoma)	1,310.0
meal allowance for the student	350.0
travelling expenses to and from school	280.0
travelling expenses to and from clinic	150.0
stoma bags	200.0

Total : 25,898.5

Minus

Assessable income NIL

= Assistance payable 25,899

(rounded up to the nearest dollar)

(Note : An annual long-term supplement of \$5,235 is payable to the elderly family member and the son suffering from carcinoma when they have received assistance continuously for 12 months or more. 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 who are old or 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 \$2,630 per month.

13. TREATMENT OF MAINTENANCE PAYMENTS

The amount of CSSA is determined by the resources and needs of an individual applicant or the applicant's family. The difference between the applicant's/family's assessable income (including maintenance payments) and recognized needs under the CSSA Scheme is the amount of assistance payable.

Unless with acceptable reason[#], applicant/recipient should seek assistance to enforce the maintenance order if he/she is a maintenance payee but has failed to receive full maintenance payments from the maintenance payer on time in accordance with the maintenance order, for instance, the maintenance payer refuses or fails to pay.

Applicant/recipient who is not the maintenance payee or has got only a nominal maintenance order is not required to file claim for maintenance as a condition for CSSA payments.

A. How to seek assistance to enforce the maintenance order?

Maintenance payee can choose to approach direct either the Family Court to apply for recovery of maintenance payments in accordance with the maintenance order or the Legal Aid Department (LAD) to apply for legal aid to seek enforcement of maintenance order.

An CSSA applicant/recipient who has neither approached direct the Family Court to apply for recovery of maintenance payments nor LAD to apply for legal aid, staff of the social security field unit will, with the agreement of the applicant/recipient, refer he/she to LAD for seeking legal assistance to enforce the maintenance order.

B. Will the amount of CSSA be affected before the maintenance in arrears have been successfully recovered?

If an applicant/recipient has approached direct either the Family Court to apply for recovery of maintenance payments or LAD to apply for legal aid for recovery of maintenance payments, the Department will cease to deduct the maintenance payments from his/her CSSA entitlements upon receiving document proof for applying for enforcement of maintenance order from the applicant/recipient.

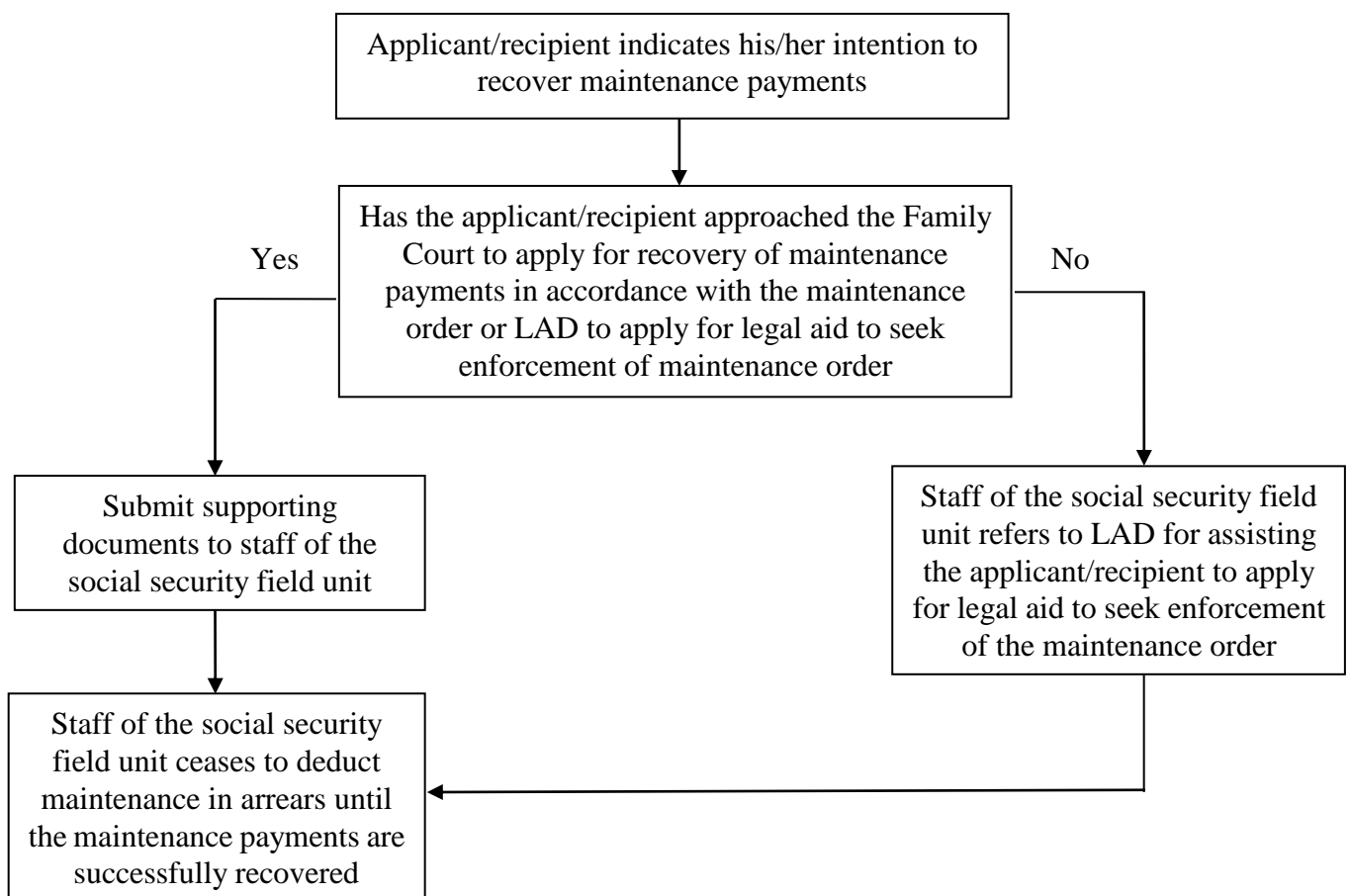
[#] Examples of acceptable reason:

- There is no way to find out the maintenance payer's whereabouts;
- There is well-founded fear of the maintenance payer who has records of violent behavior or other problems; and
- There is adequate evidence that the maintenance payer has no financial means to comply with the maintenance order, e.g. the maintenance payer is also receiving CSSA, bankrupt, etc.

The Department will cease to deduct the maintenance in arrears from applicant's/recipient's CSSA entitlements once the Department has referred the case to LAD to apply for legal aid to seek enforcement of maintenance order.

The Department will check the development and result of recovery of maintenance payments during case reviews. If there is any changes in the circumstances of a recipient which may affect his/her CSSA entitlements, including any changes in receiving maintenance payments, such as successful recovery of maintenance payments, should report immediately to the Department.

Workflow of adjusting CSSA payments
during processing the recovery of maintenance payments



C. What is the arrangement after the maintenance payments having been recovered successfully?

After the applicant/recipient has successfully recovered the maintenance payments, staff of the Department will discuss with him/her whether there is a need to adjust the CSSA payments having regard to individual circumstances.

Please contact staff of the social security field unit for more details.

14. 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 meet the eligibility criteria of the PCSSA Scheme, a person must, in addition to satisfying the income and asset tests 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 65 or above;
- (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); and
- (d) continues to reside in Guangdong or Fujian during receipt of assistance.

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 Rental Housing (PRH) tenant, he/she is required to surrender his/her PRH unit or delete his/her name from the PRH tenancy before he/she departs from Hong Kong in order to be eligible 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 burial grant applicant must make an application and produce the necessary documents within six months of the date of death of the recipient. In cases where the burial grant applicant resides in Guangdong or Fujian, the application can be processed by the Department's agent.

C. Application

All application procedures are processed in Hong Kong. An elderly CSSA recipient should bring along the necessary documents to 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/appointee's Hong Kong bank account monthly. Applicant/appointee is required to make his/her own arrangements to collect PCSSA payments from that account (for example, applicant/appointee 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.

15. WAIVER OF MEDICAL CHARGES

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

Upon registration for medical treatment or admission to hospital, please inform staff of the clinic or hospital that you are the recipient of CSSA and produce valid identity document which was used for CSSA application (e.g. Hong Kong Identity Card, Hong Kong Birth Certificate, Certificate of Exemption, Hong Kong Entry Permit, One-way Permit, Passport or Birth Certificate of other nations, etc.).

In exceptional circumstances that the eligibility status has not yet been verified but the recipient of CSSA is in need of medical treatment, he/she may approach the social security field unit concerned or the medical social worker (if there is one in that clinic or hospital) for assistance.

16. APPEAL PROCEDURES

An applicant may lodge an appeal at the Social Security Appeal Board if he/she disagrees with a decision made by the 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 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.

17. 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.

18. 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.

19. 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 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, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency, Hospital Authority, Employees Retraining Board, Education Bureau and HKMC Annuity Limited, 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).

20. 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 “Reporting Form for Suspected Fraudulent Claims for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) / Social Security Allowance (SSA)” and send it by post or by fax (fax no.: 2718 8595) to us. The Reporting Form is available at social security field units, Integrated Family Service Centres, estate offices of the Housing Department or Home Affairs Enquiry Centres; or
- email to us at fits@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.

21. 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.