

**The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme  
and the Social Security Allowance Scheme**

**Residence requirements  
for applicants and permissible limits  
of absence from Hong Kong  
during receipt of payment**





## FOREWORD

The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme and the Social Security Allowance (SSA) Scheme are the mainstays of our social security system. The CSSA Scheme is designed to provide financial assistance to bring the income of needy individuals or families up to a prescribed level to meet their basic needs. The SSA Scheme comprises Old Age Allowance, Normal Disability Allowance, Higher Disability Allowance, Normal Old Age Living Allowance, Higher Old Age Living Allowance, Guangdong Scheme and Fujian Scheme. Old Age Allowance and Disability Allowance are designed to provide a monthly allowance to Hong Kong residents who are 70 years of age or above or who are severely disabled to meet their special needs arising from old age or disability respectively. Old Age Living Allowance is to provide a special allowance per month to supplement the living expenses of Hong Kong residents aged 65 or above who are in need of financial support. Guangdong Scheme and Fujian Scheme are to provide Old Age Allowance, on a monthly basis, for eligible Hong Kong residents aged 65 or above who choose to reside in Guangdong or Fujian respectively to meet their special needs arising from old age.

To qualify for CSSA or SSA, an applicant must satisfy the prescribed eligibility criteria, including the residence requirements. CSSA and SSA recipients have to continue to reside in Hong Kong while receiving assistance/allowance. Recipients of Guangdong Scheme and Fujian Scheme must continue to reside in Guangdong (applicable to Guangdong Scheme only) or Fujian (applicable to Fujian Scheme only) during receipt of allowance.

This pamphlet explains in detail the residence requirements for CSSA and SSA applicants and the permissible limits of absence from Hong Kong during receipt of CSSA and SSA (absence from Hong Kong means leaving Hong Kong for the Mainland, Macao or overseas countries/territories). For the permissible limits of absence from Guangdong (applicable to Guangdong Scheme only) or Fujian (applicable to Fujian Scheme only) during receipt of allowance under Guangdong Scheme and Fujian Scheme, please refer to the pamphlets of SSA Scheme, Guangdong Scheme and Fujian Scheme for details. In addition to setting out these requirements, we have provided in this pamphlet a set of "Frequently Asked Questions" to help you have a better understanding of them. If you still have any question which is not covered in this pamphlet, please contact a social security field unit of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) near to your place of residence (please refer to the leaflet of Addresses and Telephone Numbers of Social Security Field Units for details).

We have separate pamphlets providing general information on the CSSA Scheme and the SSA Scheme. You can also visit the homepage of SWD (website: <http://www.swd.gov.hk>) or contact the social security field unit in proximity or our Departmental Hotline (2343 2255) for more information about these schemes.

## RESIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR CSSA and SSA APPLICANTS

### **CSSA Scheme**

To qualify for CSSA, an 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 (DSW) to a person who does not satisfy the residence requirement.

### **SSA Scheme**

To qualify for SSA, an applicant must:

- (a) have been a Hong Kong resident for at least seven years; and
- (b) have resided in Hong Kong continuously for at least one year immediately before the date of application (absence from Hong Kong up to a maximum of 56 days during the one-year period is treated as residence in Hong Kong).

Notes:

1. Persons whose presence in Hong Kong is 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 SSA Scheme.
2. Hong Kong residents aged below 18 applying for Disability Allowance are exempted from the requirements at (a) and (b) above.
3. In determining whether an applicant has resided in Hong Kong continuously for at least one year immediately before the date of application, consideration can be given to disregarding absences arising from full-time study (for Disability Allowance applicants only) or paid work outside Hong Kong during the one-year period, subject to there being sufficient documentary proof. Where an applicant has been absent from Hong Kong for more than 56 days during the one-year period because of the need to receive medical treatment outside Hong Kong, DSW can consider exercising his discretion to disregard the absences exceeding the 56-day limit, subject to the reason for and evidence of receiving medical treatment outside Hong Kong being established.

## PERMISSIBLE LIMITS OF ABSENCE FROM HONG KONG DURING RECEIPT OF CSSA/SSA

### ***CSSA Scheme – Permissible limits of absence from Hong Kong***

A CSSA 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 a year
- (b) Other recipients: 60 days a 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 DSW.)













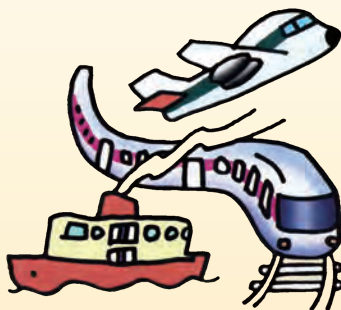




## Permissible limits of absence from Hong Kong during receipt of assistance

**Q10** Under the CSSA Scheme, a payment year for the purpose of calculating a recipient's permissible limit of absence from Hong Kong commences on 1 July and ends on 30 June in the following year. If a 50-year-old applicant who was medically certified to be in ill-health became eligible for CSSA from 2 April 2017, what is the permissible limit of absence for him/her for the period from 2 April 2017 to 30 June 2017?

**A10** The permissible limit of absence from Hong Kong for recipients who are neither old nor disabled is 60 days in each payment year. In this case, as the applicant became eligible for CSSA on 2 April 2017, the permissible limit of absence for him/her was 15 days (see 'Note' below) for the period from 2 April 2017 to 30 June 2017. If he/she continued to be eligible for CSSA after 30 June 2017, the permissible limit of absence for him/her in the payment year from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 would be 60 days.



Note:

The permissible limit of absence from Hong Kong is calculated on a pro-rata basis, having regard to the recipient's total number of days of eligibility in a payment year. In this case, the permissible limit of absence from Hong Kong from 2 April 2017 to 30 June 2017 is calculated as follows:

$$90 \text{ days}^{(1)} \times \frac{60 \text{ days}^{(2)}}{365 \text{ days}^{(3)}} = 15 \text{ days (rounded up)}$$

(1) A total of 90 days from 2 April 2017 to 30 June 2017.

(2) Permissible limit of absence from Hong Kong in a full payment year.

(3) Total number of days in the payment year.

## C. SSA Scheme

### Pre-application residence requirements

**Q1** A 70-year-old applicant applying for Old Age Allowance has been absent from Hong Kong for 80 days during the one-year period immediately before the date of application. When will he/she be able to satisfy the one-year continuous residence requirement?

**A1** As the applicant has been absent from Hong Kong for more than 56 days during the one-year period immediately before the date of application, he/she will have to reside in Hong Kong until the total number of days of residence in Hong Kong from the date of application is no less than the number of days of absence exceeding the 56-day limit during the one-year period, i.e. 24 days (80 days – 56 days) in this case. In other words, he/she is required to reside in Hong Kong for 24 days since the date of application to meet the one-year continuous residence requirement.

**Q2** A 6-year-old disabled applicant acquired Hong Kong resident status on 18 January 2017 and applied for Disability Allowance on 7 February 2017. What are the residence requirements he/she has to satisfy?

**A2** As Hong Kong residents under 18 years of age are not required to satisfy the requirement of having been a Hong Kong resident for at least seven years or the one-year continuous residence requirement for Disability Allowance, this 6-year-old Disability Allowance applicant need not satisfy any pre-application residence requirement.

**Q3** Is an ex-recipient of SSA required to meet the one-year continuous residence requirement when he/she re-applies for SSA?

**A3** If the re-application is made more than 12 months after his/her case has been closed by SWD, he/she is required to satisfy the one-year continuous residence requirement again.

Example: An applicant ceased receiving Old Age Allowance after his/her departure from Hong Kong, and his/her Old Age Allowance case was subsequently closed on 15 February 2016. He/She re-applied for Old Age Allowance when he/she returned to Hong Kong on 15 June 2017. As the Old Age Allowance case has been closed for more than 12 months, he/she has to satisfy the one-year continuous residence requirement again.

**Q4** If a recipient of CSSA Scheme opts to switch over to SSA Scheme, what is the residence requirement he/she has to satisfy?

**A4** A recipient of CSSA Scheme who opts to switch over to SSA Scheme is required to satisfy afresh the pre-application residence requirements under the SSA Scheme, i.e. the requirement of having been a Hong Kong resident for at least seven years and the one-year continuous residence requirement.

### **Permissible limits of absence from Hong Kong during receipt of allowance (applicable to recipients of Old Age Allowance/Disability Allowance/Old Age Living Allowance only)**

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**Q5** An elderly person was eligible to receive Old Age Allowance from 5 February 2017. In the first payment year, he/she stayed in Hong Kong for not less than 60 days and was absent from Hong Kong for a total of 300 days. In what way would his/her absence from Hong Kong affect the payment of Old Age Allowance?

**A5** As the recipient had resided in Hong Kong for not less than 60 days in the payment year, he/she was entitled to the 305-day permissible limit of absence from Hong Kong. Since the recipient was absent from Hong Kong for 300 days in the payment year, the number of days of absence was less than the permissible limit. He/She was entitled to receive a full-year allowance in that payment year.

**Q6** A recipient was eligible for Old Age Allowance on 10 February 2017, he/she then returned to live in the Mainland for most of the time. He/She only stayed in Hong Kong for a total of 34 days in a payment year. In what way would his/her absence from Hong Kong affect the payment of Old Age Allowance to him/her?

**A6** As the recipient had resided in Hong Kong for less than 60 days in the payment year, he/she should not have been entitled to any absence allowance in that payment year. He/She was only entitled to receive Old Age Allowance during his/her 34-day residence in Hong Kong.

If the total amount of Old Age Allowance already paid to him/her exceeds the amount to which he/she should have been entitled, he/she has to repay the overpayment to SWD.



