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LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Revised: November 2016

Who Resides In the House

You must prove to the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation (MSDSI) of where you are living and who are you living with if you want to receive benefits. The amount of assistance you are eligible for depends on how many people are in your family unit, that **reside** in the house. If you move locations, or a roommate, spouse, partner, or child or children move in to **or** out of your home need to be reported to the Ministry within 10 days.

If a member of the family unit leaves the home the amount of assistance will decrease. Sometimes it can temporarily stay at the same rate for up to 3 months during extreme situations.

These are the situations where the rate can stay the same:

- The death of a member in the family unit (will stay at the same rate for 3 months),
- A member of the family unit is a warrant holder and leaves the province to solve an outstanding warrant,
- A member of the family unit is in a residential alcohol or drug treatment facility,
- A member of the family unit is out of the province (with ministry approval),
- A member of the family unit is temporarily hospitalized.

What is a Family Unit?

According to the Ministry family unit can be one of the following:

- Single persons with or without dependent children
- Persons who are married or living together in a marriage-like relationship and reside together for three months or 9 months out of the past 12 months and any dependent children.

Common-Law/Spousal Relationship

You will be considered to be in a common-law relationship if you are not married but are living with your partner, whether it is a same-sex relationship or opposite-sex relationship.

- You will be considered to be living in a “spousal relationship” (also known as a “**dependency relationship**”) with a spouse or partner or roommate if the one or more of the following are present:
 - Sharing a bank account
 - Sharing credit cards
 - Having both names registered on property
 - Having only one name on a tenancy agreement
 - Sharing household tasks & expenses
 - Attending community & social events as a couple
 - Acting as a parent to the other’s child (being on records at the child’s school as an emergency contact, calling the other person “Mom” or “Dad” etc...)

If you are considered to be in a spousal relationship by the Ministry and you are not, you must be prepared to prove this. (If you are living with a roommate see the roommate section for more information on how to protect yourself.)

In a Relationships but NOT Living Together

You do not have to tell the Ministry about your relationship if you are in a relationship or dating someone but not living with them (unless they are giving you financial support).

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If You Are Separated

The Ministry will ask you a series of questions if you are separated from your spouse, particularly in relation to financial interests in assets or whether you are receiving money. This is because they expect you to receive spousal support and expect you to pursue any and all other income or assets that may be available to you.

Roommates

The Ministry is always on the lookout for fraud and 2 people residing together can draw attention as to whether there is an undeclared “dependency relationship”. There are ways to protect your-self from any allegations of a roommate being more than a roommate. They include:

- Have a **tenancy agreement with both your names listed** and the amount of rent each of you pay (separately).
- Pay your rent directly to the Landlord and get your own receipt of payment.
- Ensure each has **separate bedrooms** (two people living in a one-[bedroom](#) unit will cause suspicion that one may not be sleeping on the couch).
- Create a written agreement confirming the split of any costs (such as 50% of the hydro bill) when a bill must be shared.
- Do NOT combine your income.
- Do NOT get joint bank accounts or credit cards.
- Do NOT insure the other person’s vehicle (deemed shared asset).
- Do NOT pay each other’s bills.

3 Generation Families

Three-generation families are considered a family unit and are subject to the same eligibility rules and are eligible for the same rates and supplements as other family units. A three-generation family must live together and include at least:

- One parent eligible for income, hardship or disability assistance,
- A parenting dependent child (PDC – under the age of 19) and a child of a parenting dependent child

What is a three-generation family?

This is when the grandparents, parents and grandchildren all live together in the same home.

Renting Between Parents and Adult Children

The Ministry expects that a parent will provide shelter to their adult children or adult children will house their parents and consequently, will not provide shelter portions when either of the above occur. However, if they are renting a place together it is a shared rent situation and as long as both parties are listed on the rental agreement rental portion will be available to one or both parties if they are on income assistance.

Room and Board

When a person is residing in a room and board situation the room and board cost will be covered by the Ministry and they will provide the person a comfort allowance. **Comfort allowance is only issued if there is money available under the person’s entitlement.**