

Social Grants Information

Source: Adapted from an article by Theresa Smith in The Independent on Saturday, 23 Feb 2002, courtesy of Independent Newspapers (Pty) Ltd

"Social assistance" is a grant one can receive from the government if one has limited or no sources of income and cannot pay for food and shelter. This money comes from a non-contributory fund that the government supports through taxes and other income sources. South Africa does not have a universal social security system, but applies a "means test" to make sure that only those in genuine need qualify for assistance.

Only South African citizens qualify to receive a social grant. One will not receive a grant if one is in a State institution receiving food and shelter, such as a State old-age home, a prison, a psychiatric hospital or care-and-treatment centre. When one applies for a social grant, a welfare officer will consider whether the applicant has any other sources of income. If you own the property you live in, its value will not be considered as an asset. Income refers to one's salary, pension, any rent received or any interest earned from assets owned by the applicant. The grant is given on a sliding scale: that is, the more money one earns, the lower the grant will be. Applications may be refused a grant if one's income and assets are too high – i.e. one fails the means test.

Where and how to apply for a grant:

Apply at the nearest welfare office. If there is no office close to where you live, go to the nearest Magistrate's Office. A family member or friend can apply for you if they take with them written permission from you, **and** a doctor's certificate stating that you are unable to apply for yourself.

If you are unable to fill in an application form yourself, it will be filled in for you by an officer in your presence. The officer will check with you that all the information on the form is correct before you sign it. The officer will also check that you have brought copies of the necessary documents that prove you qualify for the grant.

You will be given a copy of the completed application form or a receipt with a date stamp and the signature showing the name of the officer who helped you. Keep this receipt as proof of your application. It does not cost you anything to apply for a grant. If your application is unsuccessful, you should receive a written explanation.

How long does it take before you start receiving money?

This varies from province to province, but you should receive the first payment within three months. When you apply, you will be told when you

will be paid. You can keep track of the application by phoning the welfare department's toll-free number: **0800 220 250**

How grants are paid:

Grants are paid once a month. As soon as the grant is approved, payment is backdated to the date of application. Foster-child grants are paid from the date of the court order when the child was placed in the custody of the foster parents.

When you apply, tell the official how you want to be paid. You have several choices:

- The Post Office
- Direct into your bank account
- In cash at the Welfare Department
- In cash from the machine at a paypoint at a Welfare Office. You put your hand or card on a screen for identification. The machine is programmed to identify you and how much you are due to be paid. If the money is not available, the slip must state this and why.
- By cheque through the mail
- If you live in a private institution, it will receive a cheque on your behalf.

If you can't collect your grant:

When you cannot collect the grant yourself, you can select someone to collect it for you. You have to sign a form called a "Power of Attorney" form that entitles the person you select to collect your money for you. You can get this form at your Welfare Office.

Remember:

A grant can increase or decrease if your circumstances change. The Welfare Department will review your circumstances every year. If your grant stops, visit or phone a welfare office near you, or call the toll-free number. If you have a complaint about a Welfare employee, call the offices of the following national government leaders:

Mr Zola Skweyiya, Minister of Social Development

Telephone: (012) 312 7636

Fax: (012) 325 7071

or

Mr Selby Baqwa, Public Protector

Telephone: (012) 322 2916

Fax: (012) 322 5093

A LIST OF GRANTS AND CRITERIA:

Grant for the Aged

To qualify for a Social Old Age Pension, you must be a man of 65 years or older, or a woman of 60 years or older. This is because many households in South Africa are headed by women and because women spend their income on children more often. From 1 April 2002, the grant will be R620 per month.

War Veteran's Grant

War veterans qualify for R18 a month in addition to either a grant for the aged or a disability grant. This is paid to people 60 years and older who served in the South African Defence Force during certain wars, including World War Two (1939 - 1945) and the Korean War (1950 - 1953). From 1 April 2002, the total value of the War Veteran's grant is R638.

Disability Grant

You qualify for a Disability grant if you are older than 18 years and have a disability which makes it impossible for you to work for an income. Your disability must be confirmed by a medical report from a medical officer or an assessment panel. If your disability is not permanent, you will be reassessed on an ongoing basis to check if you still require the grant. From 1 April 2002, the value of the Disability grant is R620.

Care Dependency Grant

This grant is for children who are severely disabled and need special care. Parents or foster parents, whose combined yearly income is not over R48 000 per year (after allowable deductions) may apply. The child's needs must be verified by a medical doctor in a government hospital. No sliding scale is applied. Should the child receive any additional income, it should not be more than twice the yearly amount of the Care Dependency grant. From 1 April 2002, the value of the Care Dependency grant is R620 per month.

Child Support Grant

This grant is given to the primary caregiver of a child or children (up to a maximum of six children) under the age of seven. The caregiver may or may not be a relative of the child and must not receive any other income in respect of that child. This grant was implemented in April 1998 to help with the cost of rearing children in poor households because the first seven years are a child's most formative years. Many mothers experience difficulty with child-care during this period and this affects their own ability to find work. The award of this grant depends on where you live. As a caregiver, you qualify if you:

- live in a rural area in a formal or informal dwelling and your income is not more than R13 200 a year
- live in an urban area in a formal or informal dwelling and your income is not more than R13 200 a year
- live in an urban area in a formal dwelling and your income is not more than R9 600 a year

(A formal dwelling is defined as a structure of brick or concrete or asbestos materials).

From 1 April 2002, the value of a Child Support grant is R130 per month.

Foster Child Grant

This grant is for children who have been placed into the care of a person who is not their parent. Any additional income the child may receive from

another source must be considered. If the child receives an income from any other source that is more than twice the yearly amount of a Foster-child grant, the child does not qualify. From 1 April 2002, the value of the Foster-child grant is R450 per month.

Grant-in-aid

This is an extra amount that you can apply for if you already receive a grant, but need full-time care from someone else.

Social Relief

Social relief is available for people in desperate need, mainly for destitute people in need of temporary support, such as those waiting for approval of a social welfare grant. The money is intended to help them during the crisis period. You qualify for this relief if:

- You have applied for a grant but it has not yet been processed. Once the grant is paid, the social relief money is subtracted from the grant.
- You are too sick to work, but have medical proof that you will get better within six months.
- You are a single parent trying to get maintenance from the other parent of your child, but have not been able to do so yet.
- You are a single parent whose partner has died and left nothing for the family to live on.
- You are a parent whose partner is the breadwinner and is awaiting trial or in a government institution, such as a hospital or jail.
- You have experienced a natural disaster, such as a flood, but not if the whole area has been affected and other emergency funds are available for the area.

Social relief is only available for up to three months, but you can apply for a three-month extension of the payments.

Transport Relief

There is a special form of relief for transport money for people who:

- Have been told by their doctor or clinic that they need special medical treatment but cannot afford to get to the place of treatment, or
- Have been promised a job but do not have money to get to the place of employment.

This money is made available only once.

WHAT YOU NEED TO APPLY FOR A GRANT

When applying for any State grant at a Welfare office, always take with you your South African bar-coded Identity Document (ID) and proof of income and assets.

Depending on the type of grant you apply for, there are other documents you need to take with you. These are:

Grant for the Aged:

- Your marriage certificate
- A death certificate if your husband or wife has died

War Veteran's Grant:

- Your marriage certificate
- A death certificate if your husband or wife has died
- A medical certificate if you are disabled
- Proof of your war service

Foster Child Grant:

- The child's computerised 13-number birth certificate or Identity Document
- Proof of the child's income
- The court order showing that the child has been placed in your care
- Proof of the child's school attendance

Grant for the Disabled:

- Your marriage certificate
- A death certificate if your husband or wife has died
- Your medical certificate

Care Dependency Grant:

- A medical certificate
- The child's computerised 13-number birth certificate or Identity Document
- If you are a single parent, proof that the other parent cannot contribute financially

Child Support Grant:

- The child's computerised 13-number birth certificate or Identity Document
- An affidavit (a statement signed by you under oath) if you have no income