

SFI Definitions and Programs

Alberta Family & Social Services Supports For Independence Policy Manual (AFSS, 1999) defines the basic SFI allowance as comprised of a “standard allowance,” a “shelter allowance,” and “health benefits.”

The “standard allowance” is meant to cover all costs for the following items:

- *Food;*
- *Clothing, including diapers;*
- *Household needs, including furniture, appliances and household supplies;*
- *Personal needs;*
- *Installation and use of a telephone, including the deposit charge;*
- *Laundry;*
- *Transportation (AFSS, 1999).*

The “shelter allowance” is provided for the “actual shelter costs of the applicant or recipient, up to the maximums prescribed” and includes the following expenses for rental units:

- *Damage deposit*
- *Rent*
- *Fuel*
- *Utilities*
- *Lot rental for a mobile home*

If the recipient owns their home, the shelter allowance is meant to cover their costs for mortgage payments, municipal taxes, insurance, fuel and utilities, condominium fees, lot rental for a mobile home, and maintenance costs not exceeding \$19.00 per month (AFSS, 1999).

Health benefits include Alberta Health Care. No extended coverage is provided for SFI recipients who are deemed to be employable. Extended health benefits are only provided for those recipients who are eligible to receive benefits under the “Assured Support” sub-program as a result of a severe disability.

In addition, “Supplementary Allowances” are made, at the discretion of a Department Director, for emergency expenses, special diets, child care, costs for a new infant, moving, employment training, school fees, etc.

The maximum benefits for each SFI recipient depend on their family size and employment status. Recipients are assigned to one of four sub-programs depending on their ability to work:

1. The Supplement to Earnings Sub-Program is for recipients who are employed.
2. The Employment and Training Support Sub-Program is for recipients who are “able to be employed and available for employment” or who are “able to participate in an education or training program.”
3. The Transitional Support Sub-Program is for recipients who are unavailable for employment due to “a temporary health problem” or who are caring for a disabled family-member or a child under 6 months of age.
4. The Assured Support Sub-Program is for recipients who are severely disabled, have “persistent mental or physical health problems” or face “multiple barriers to employment beyond the control of the person.”

The benefits received by recipients under the first two sub-programs are identical. Under the sub-programs for recipients who are not able to work, shelter allowances are somewhat higher than in sub-programs intended for individuals who are deemed to be “employable.”

The table below shows the maximum basic allowance that each of our sample SFI recipients would receive, plus a school fee allowance of \$50.00 (where appropriate) and an employment training allowance of \$300.00 per year. Again, we are assuming that at least one adult member of each of our sample families is employable, looking for work, and participating in an employment training program.

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Table 2: SFI Rates for Sample Recipients

Recipient's Family Size	Single Female		Lone Female Parent Family		2 Parent Family	
	\$ Per Month	\$ Per Year	\$ Per Month	\$ Per Year	\$ Per Month	\$ Per Year
Standard Allowance	229.00	2,748.00	403.00	4,836.00	579.00	6,948.00
Shelter Rate	168.00	2,016.00	503.00	6,036.00	524.00	6,288.00
Child's School Fees	--	--	--	50.00	--	50.00
Employment Program	--	300.00	--	300.00	--	300.00
Total Allowance	397.00	5,064.00	906.00	11,222.00	1,103.00	13,586.00

As Table 2 indicates, the SFI program provides a total annual income of \$5,064 for single females, \$11,222 for lone-parent families and \$13,586 for two-parent families.