



October 2014

FIRST NATIONS SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

October 2014 NEWSLETTER

Melennia's Message

October 6, 2014

FNSDS is proud to announce that on September 18th, the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs passed Resolution #2014-22:Support For The First Nations Social Development Society.

With a mandate to promote and be a catalyst for positive social change, FNSDS seeks to increase awareness of First Nations social development issues and to help resolve policy conflict to improve the welfare of First Nations people on-reserve. The political support provided by the UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly assists the Society to engage government agencies to improve programs and empower our First Nations people toward self-sustainability.

The UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly recognized four steps toward the advancement of social innovation on-reserve in the resolution:

The UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly fully supports the continued work of the FNSDS in our efforts toward advocating, improving and advancing social development policy initiatives on-reserve to improve the welfare of individuals on-reserve;

The UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly calls on the federal and provincial government to work with the FNSDS in bringing forward a workable solution that will serve to protect First Nations individuals & communities from the severe negative impacts of social policy on-reserve;

The UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the UBCIC Executive and staff to work with the FNSDS and other like minded organizations to develop a social policy working group; and

The Social Policy Working Group is to report back to the UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly on the status of the working group at the 2015 UBCIC Annual General Assembly.

Our sincere gratitude to the UBCIC Chiefs-in-Assembly and staff. At FNSDS, we take the welfare of our people and communities to heart and we look forward to working on these initiatives.

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FNSDS Mandate

Ensuring that policy responds appropriately and effectively to the Social Development needs identified by BC First Nations.

Advancing the capacity, working conditions and professional development of front line workers in the Social Development field.

Continually advancing the efficiency, effectiveness and innovation of Social Development services in BC.

Strategically asserting the voice of First Nations in BC Social Development policy.

Assisting First Nations communities with developing Active Measures, with a goal of reducing dependency on social programs.

[UBCIC Resolution #2014-22: Support For The First Nations Social Development Society](#)

http://www.fnsds.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/FNSDS-section-of-UBCIC_AGA_09-19_ResolutionsPackage.pdf

FIRST NATIONS SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

Suite 102 - 70 Orwell St., North Vancouver, CANADA - V7J 3R5

FNSDS' Resource Centre continues to field numerous inquiries from BSDWs, IA clients, and Band staff.

Policyinfo@fnsds.org

or call **1-800-991-7099/ 604-983-9820**

9.6 School Start-up Supplement

This is a reminder that the School Start-up Supplement can be provided now that school has started. This policy benefits all Social Assistance Clients with dependant children, including Hardship Clients.

This benefit can be made available to all status children who do not receive any assistance of this kind from their Nation's education department. Clients must prove eligibility by providing a letter for their file from their Nation that the Nation is not providing any school start up assistance.

The amount of the supplement is:

- \$100 for 5 - 11 year olds
- \$175 for 12 - 18 year olds

Children must be enrolled in a school program to be eligible.

Please note that if a Nation provides a school start-up through their Education department that is less than the amounts provided by policy 9.6, that Social Assistance cannot top it up to the amounts available through Social Assistance.

11.5 December Supplementary Allowance

As fall is upon us December is

First Nations Social Development Society provides essential Social Assistance program training. This includes core skills, policy review, and program specific modules.

Our priority is to train BSDWs and other employees of BC Administering Authorities and First Nations.

Unfortunately at this time we are not accepting registrations for 2015 trainings, which are tentatively planned. Please stay in touch.

In-House (North Vancouver)

- Nov. 5-7, 2014 ***FULL***
- Feb. 4-6, 2015
- Mar. 4-6, 2015

Regional

- Victoria: Oct. 8-10, 2014 ***FULL***
- Kamloops: Mar. 11-13, 2015

One-to-one and Targeted Training

Please find that one-to-one custom training and special topic specific targeted training sessions may be available subject to FNSDS capacity and staff availability. We have had success in providing interdepartmental training from a Social Development perspective to groups from single Nations. We also have had success with pre-compliance file reviews.

Note: Travel and accommodation costs will not be covered by FNSDS. Please contact FNSDS Program Officers Chris Lechkobit or Tami Omeasoo:
- Email: chris@fnsds.org or tami@fnsds.org
- Phone: 1-800-991-7099; 604-983-9820

<http://www.fnsds.org/training-programs/2014-2015-training-schedule/>

Pre-Compliance Training

First Nations Social Development Society is always looking to innovate within its programs. This year we have introduced pre-compliance training upon request. In this service we sit with a First Nation or Administering Authority at our offices to review a sample of files and look for trends of non-compliance. In this way, we help prepare FNs and AAs for compliance and proactively alleviate concerns that could lead to a recovery. We have found this service to be useful to our Clients. As well, we notice that this service helps get FNs and AAs on the ball about archiving old material from files and making files clean and organized. Please be in touch to enquire about this service.

Resource Centre—Stats

The First Nations Social Development Society delivers the Policy Clarification Resource Centre program as one of its core services. This is the service that provides access to FNSDS Program Officers via email and phone. We continue to see high usage rates of the Resource Centre and the usage statistics graph below demonstrates the ongoing increasing demand on this service. FNSDS is proud to support BSDWs, BC First Nations and Administering Authorities, and their Clients in this way.

Please find the FNSDS Resource Centre's 2nd Quarter stats below:

Policyinfo@fnsds.org email inquiries: **215**

Program Officer email inquiries: **807**

Phone inquiries: **626**

2nd Quarter Total inquiries: **1648**

Contact FNSDS:

1-800-991-7099 or 604-983-9820

You can also send your policy inquiries via email:

tami@fnsds.org; chris@fnsds.org; policyinfo@fnsds.org

RESOURCE CENTRE UPDATE

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around the corner. Please remember that the December Supplementary Allowance is available to Clients.

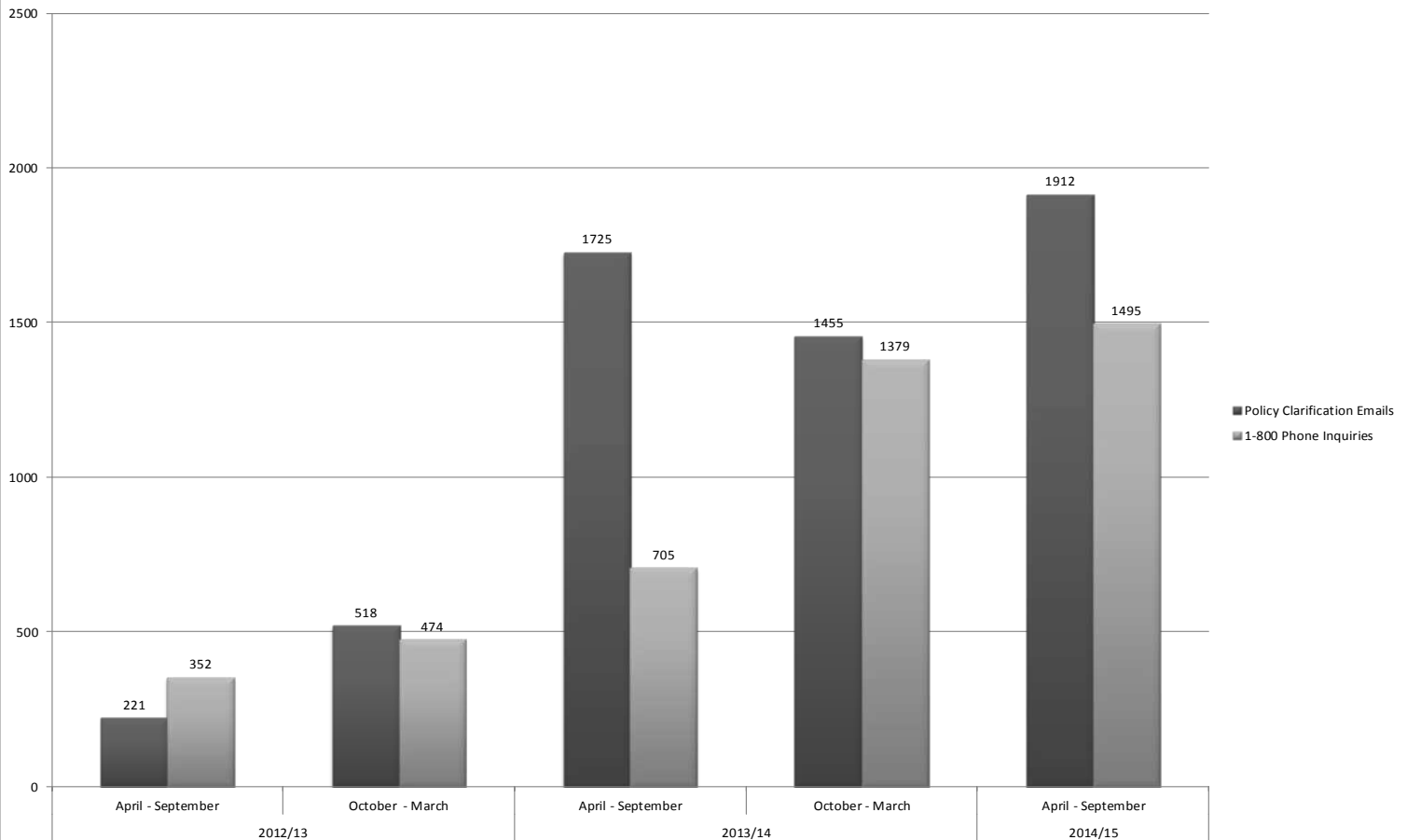
This benefit is available to all Social Assistance Clients except for COPH recipients and Hardship Clients. It is payable for December so do not forget it when prepping your cheque run in November!

The amount of the benefit is:

- \$35 for a single with no dependants
- \$70 for couples
- An extra \$10 for each dependent child in the family unit.

This benefit is payable from the basic needs budget and therefore is fully reimbursed.

FNSDS 2012-2014 Policy Clarification Resource Centre Statistics



Teachers Strike—Parent Support Resource

During the recent BC Teachers strike, the BC Liberals promised to pay eligible parents \$40 per day for each child under 12. The purpose of this pay is to compensate parents for child care costs incurred during the strike.

When considering this benefit from a Social Assistance perspective it automatically seems problematic for Clients' eligibility. This is because the \$40 per day would definitely effect Clients' eligibility if it is considered income.

However, AANDC is following the Province of BC's lead and has determined that the Parent Support Resource is not considered income. This means that it is fully exempted as income and as an asset. Therefore, it will not impact income assistance eligibility for any recipients.

<http://bcparentinfo.ca/parent-support-resources/>

PWD and MNS Eligibility

FNSDS has observed a recent trend with PWD and MNS applications: We are seeing increasing numbers of PWD and MNS applications from ineligible persons. This is not referring to applicants who have been denied PWD or MNS after adjudication.

We note that PWD booklets are increasingly being requested for and submitted by persons who are not yet Social Assistance Clients. PWD applicants must be established Social Assistance Clients. A basic component of PWD eligibility is that Clients are eligible for Social Assistance in-general and have a currently open file.

If a person is given PWD designation

Funeral Authorizations and Funeral Billings Form—How to

With the recent amendment to 11.7 Funeral Costs and the associated form SA108 Funeral Services Billing, responsibility for authorization has been changed from AANDC to First Nations and Administering Authorities. What was once authorized by Funding Services Officers is now authorized by Band Social Development Workers

This means that BSDWs or other officers of FNs and AAs are now responsible for ensuring that all approved funeral requests are compliant. This includes means testing the estate, monitoring upgrades, initiating cost recoveries, liaising with Funeral Service Providers, ensuring proper provision of the forms and documentation, and making payment, etc.

BSDWs must now include the following procedures as part of their funeral request file work:

- Perform a means test on the estate to ensure that there are no available funds to pay for the funerary procedures and ceremonies.
- Ensure that the estate and responsible person apply for all available benefits such as CPP—Death Benefit or Last Post (for war veterans)
- Liaise with the Funeral Services Provider(s) and ensure that invoices are provided.
- Ensure that the Funeral Services Billing form is properly completed and that it accurately reflects Funeral Services Provider invoices.
- Ensure that payments do not exceed maximums per section.
- Properly document any upgrades made by the estate or other persons.
- Make authorization and payment for funeral services.
- Perform any cost recoveries as required by policy.

Please note that as per the new funeral billings form, that these expenditures are now subject to audit during an AANDC Program Compliance Review.

Compliance Note...**New Applications and Date of Eligibility:**

We have fielded Social Assistance procedural inquiries recently regarding when a new applicant is ultimately deemed eligible. New applicants are not eligible until all required documentation and information is provided. Only at this time can payment be issued. Eligibility is never established on the day the application was initiated unless Client brought all documentation and information necessary to complete their file. All payments made before Client completes their file are non-compliant and may be subject to an automatic recovery

Smoke Alarms Save Lives!

Smoke alarms have been proven – time and time again – to be a powerful tool in saving lives. There were several house fires in First Nation communities in BC over the last year and we know that in some of them, working smoke alarms made the critical difference. Properly installed and maintained smoke alarms are extremely important and are a cost-effective means to protecting individuals and families.

The First Nations Emergency Services Society of BC's Fire Services Department works with First Nation communities in preventing house fires, which includes the prevention of injury, loss of life and damage to property. The Smoke Alarm Program has been put into place in order to aid the process of prevention. FNESS is urging communities that have received smoke alarms to complete installations, for in 2013 numerous structural fires across British Columbia were reported on reserves. The serious implications of structural fires can leave families in financial and emotional despair. The National Fire Protection Association estimates that nearly two-thirds of deaths from house fires occur in properties without working smoke alarms; thus, the completion of installation of smoke alarms will reduce the chance of loss of life dramatically!

If you require information about smoke alarms or on any matter related to fire safety/prevention, please contact FNESS Fire Services Department at 1-888-822-3388.

[Quick Note...](#)

Eligibility of 65+ Clients, Pensions, and 11.3 Supplementary Assistance to Old Age Security Pension

It has come to our attention that some First Nations and Administering Authorities are automatically denying eligibility to Clients 65 years old and over. We have also noted FNs or AAs cutting off Clients once they turn 65 or start receiving federal government pensions.

This is not necessary and not an acceptable practice because Clients over 65 and those in receipt of federal government pensions may still retain Social Assistance eligibility after accounting for these incomes. This is because pension incomes may not exceed Client's eligible Social Assistance entitlement. In this way, Clients would receive the difference between their lower federal pension amount and their higher Social Assistance entitlement just as if they were reporting other incomes.

Hence, Clients 65 years and older receive significantly higher rates than Clients under 65 in most Client classes. In this way, Clients 65 years and older are effectively protected from losing eligibility due to obtaining federal pensions unless their pension amounts are significantly high.

Additionally, under policy 11.3 Supplementary Assistance to Old Age Security Pension, Clients aged 65 years or older who are in receipt of any of Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement, federal (spouse's) allowance, and provincial Seniors Supplement payments automatically receive the Shelter Maximum regardless of their actual shelter costs. This is a massive benefit and will also safeguard Client eligibility.

before they become eligible for Social Assistance, that PWD would be revoked if discovered and the person would have to re-apply in full. Remember that as the BSDW, when you file a PWD Request form for a Client, that you are signing off that they are eligible to apply in the first place.

We also note that we receive MNS requests for Clients who do not meet MNS eligibility requirements. To apply for MNS, Clients must hold PWD designation. BSDWs must include a copy of Client's PWD designation letter to verify Client's eligibility when requesting a MNS application.

Shelter Bills and Date of Eligibility

We have noticed a number of inquiries regarding shelter bills that predate the date of Social Assistance eligibility. These cannot be paid. This includes any arrears that were incurred before Client became eligible for Social Assistance. In the end, Clients are responsible for any debts incurred before they became eligible for Social Assistance.

2.2 Payment of Benefits: Under no circumstances is payment to be made for any period that predates the application

Manual Amendments

Please note that no new manual amendments have been released by AANDC since August, when 3.3 Identification Requirements was re-released. Should AANDC release further updates, FNSDS will continue to pass them along by email and post them to our website, fnsds.org.

Disability Program Notes...

PWD Note

Please remember that adjudication criteria is publically available on our website. This information may be useful to physicians, assessors, Clients and advocates in preparation for completing the PWD booklet.

<http://www.fnsds.org/pwd-program/pwd-adjudication-criteria-2/>

Contact Gina:

1-877-985-5565 or 604-983-9820

You can also send your PWD/MNS inquiries via email:

gina@fnsds.org

Administrative Review Recommendations:

FNSDS receives and reviews PWD and MNS Administrative Reviews. We note that a number of Administrative Reviews are lodged without any additional information to support the Appellant's claim. Unfortunately, Administrative Reviews without supporting documentation and information for the Administrative Review and why the Administrative Reviewed decision should be revised will have a much more difficult time in being successful as a review would be based on the original information that informed the original decision. It is in the Appellant's best interest to provide documentation and information that would shift the balance of judgment in their favour. Without such documentation and information, there is no basis for Administrative Reviews Adjudicators to revise the Administrative Reviewed decision.

PWD and MNS Stats for 1st half of 2014-2015

Month	PWD Application Sent Out	PWD Files Received	PWD Adjudicated	PWD Waiting for Information
April	-	33	16	0
May	-	57	43	0
June	-	25	37	0
July	-	55	32	3
August	-	29	56	1
September	-	24	24	3
Totals	409	223	208	7

Month	MNS Applications Sent Out	MNS Files Received	MNS Adjudicated
April	-	2	2
May	-	4	4
June	-	4	4
July	-	6	4
August	-	2	4
September	-	5	5
Totals	46	23	23

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