

Changes to Ministry of Human Resources Policy OFF RESERVE

By Cindy Brewer, Financial Assistance Worker

As many of you are aware, there will be a change in the Provincial Policy regarding the Social Assistance Benefits **off** reserve. These changes will not affect the benefits or rates of those individuals that are receiving Social Assistance from our office. Although many may be aware of the change in policy you may not be aware of how it works. I found the following information on the website www.mhr.gov.bc/publicat/bcca/timelimit.htm. If you don't have access to the internet Here is what was available:

Time Limits

BC Employment and Assistance recognizes that the people this ministry serves are truly a resource. The program supports British Columbians in achieving their potential by moving people from income assistance to sustainable employment, and by providing income assistance to those in need.

Personal responsibility and active participation are the key principles of BC Employment and Assistance. Employable applicants are expected to look for work before they receive assistance and people receiving income assistance are expected to seek work or participate in job placement and job training programs so they may reach their goal of self-sufficiency.

People with disabilities who can work are supported by employment programs that recognize the cyclical nature of some disabilities.

Assistance is also available to those in need who are not expected to gain independence through employment.

How Time Limits Work

- Employable clients will be limited to a cumulative 24 months (two years) of income assistance out of every 60 months (five years).
- The time limit "clock" starts running April 1, 2002. Any months of income assistance you may have received before April 1, 2002 will not count toward your total.
- Any months of full or partial support and/or shelter assistance that you receive after April 1, 2002 will count toward your total.
- Once you find employment and stop receiving assistance, the "clock" will stop running on the 24-month time limit.

Exceptions

Time limits will apply to clients expected to look for and accept work. Time limits will not apply to a client who is a:

- Person with disabilities
- Person 65 years or older
- Dependent child

- Child in the hope of a relative (CIHR)
- Single parent with a child under three years old; or caring for a disabled child
- Person “temporarily excused” from seeking work
- Refugee claimants who have not yet been granted permission to take up permanent residence in Canada i.e., “landed” status.

Once the Time Limit is Reached

Singles and couples who exceed the time limit of 24 months in a 60 month (five-year) period will be affected as follows:

- No eligibility for employable singles
- No eligibility for employable couples, with both adults over the limit
- \$300 reduction per month for employable couples with one adult over the time limit

Families with children who exceed their time limits will have their rates reduced by:

- \$100 per month for single parents
- \$100 per month for two-parent families where one is over the time limit
- \$200 per month where both parents are over the time limit.

For more information contact your nearest Ministry Office, listed under the Ministry of Human Resources in the blue pages of the Telus Directory or Phone Enquiry BC at: Victoria 250-387-6121; Vancouver/Lower Mainland 604-660-2421; elsewhere in BC at 1-800-663-7867.

I hope that this information will help clarify any questions that you may have. If not, feel free to contact the numbers shown above.