



NOVA SCOTIA
Community Services
Office of the Minister

Rec'd Dec 5, 17

PO Box 696, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3J 2T7 • www.gov.ns.ca

DEC 01 2017

Mr. Chuck Porter, MLA
Chair of the Standing Committee on Community Services
Legislative Committee Office
2nd floor, One Government Place, 1700 Granville Street
PO Box 2630 Station M
Halifax, NS
B3J 3P7

Dear Mr. ~~Porter~~: *Chuck*

Thank you for your letter of November 22, 2017, with respect to correspondence received from Benefits Reform Action Group (BRAG) regarding annual reviews for Employment Support Income Assistance (ESIA) recipients.

The ESIA Program does require recipients to meet with their caseworker on an annual basis, to review eligibility and to confirm they are receiving the correct level of assistance and supports. This review also provides recipients with the opportunity to discuss any concerns or needs they may have, advise of any change in circumstances, and to ensure that documentation and consents are updated.

A caseworker would not have reason to ask a recipient how much money they have in their pocket. The annual review is conducted in a professional and respectful manner. If there are concerns, the recipient is encouraged to speak with the local office's supervisor or manager.

Medical supporting documentation may be requested at an annual review when:

- it is unclear how the disability or illness affects the ability to participate in employment or employability activities.
- there are special needs that have expired or changed.

When there is existing documentation on file, new documentation is not required unless it is out of date, there is a change in the recipient's circumstances regarding employability, and/or there is a new request for medical related special needs. The form does ask specific questions regarding activities of daily living that include mobility questions. This information assists caseworkers in the determination of eligibility for specific types of special needs.

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The Department, through Transformation, is currently working on immediate and longer term improvements to the ESIA Program. The Standard Household Rate (SHR) is being developed and expected to be implemented in 2019-20. With the SHR, all ESIA clients in Nova Scotia will receive an increase to their income assistance benefit to help them better meet their needs. This will also assist in reducing administrative burden for caseworkers, so they can focus on assisting clients to achieve their goals. In no way would a delay brought about by the department in scheduling an annual review affect a clients ongoing eligibility or issuance of a recipient's payment.

ESIA Caseworkers are not required to be social workers. They are guided by the ESIA regulations and policies that ensure client and program accountability in all aspects of program delivery. The Department of Community Services is working very hard with our community partners and leaders through our transformation initiatives to make life better for the clients we serve and to support more Nova Scotians to live independent lives.

Thank you for your letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly Regan".

Hon. Kelly Regan
Minister

cc: Kendall Worth