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- Minnesota financial aid to the bli



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# MINNESOTA FINANCIAL AID TO THE BLIND PROGRAM

## STATE SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC WELFARE

CENTENNIAL OFFICE BUILDING

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA 55101

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# INTRODUCTION

**The citizens of Minnesota, through their elected representatives, have given serious consideration for many years to the problems of visually handicapped persons. An outgrowth of this is a program of financial aid to the needy blind, which has been in effect in Minnesota continuously since July 1, 1923. This program is only one of many that have been inaugurated on federal, state, and county levels to assist the blind person in adjusting to the handicap and in becoming socially and economically independent.**

**This outline of Aid to the Blind is intended only to give general information. Detailed facts about Aid to the Blind and other welfare programs and services may be obtained from any one of the county welfare department offices. These offices usually are located in the county courthouse.**

# **1. What is Aid to the Blind?**

**Aid to the Blind is financial assistance provided by the Federal, State and County governments to blind persons of any age who are in need. The financial aid includes allowances for shelter, fuel, light, food, clothing, medical care, household incidentals, and special items essential to the blind individual's welfare.**

# **2. Is Aid to the Blind a Pension?**

**No. It is granted only to blind persons who are in need of financial assistance.**

# **3. Who is a blind person?**

**For purposes of this program, a blind person means one who has a degree of vision which is 20/200 or less (Snellen Notation) in the better eye after correction or who has an equivalent limitation in the visual field. (This is about 80% loss of vision.)**

# **4. Is a medical examination necessary?**

**Yes. No assistance can be given without an examination and report by a licensed ophthalmologist. The county agency will pay for the cost of an initial eye examination.**

## **5. Where may a person apply for Aid to the Blind?**

The applicant should make his application for assistance at his local county welfare office.

## **6. How long must a blind person live in Minnesota to be eligible?**

The rule is one year, but this may be waived if the person became blind while living in Minnesota.

## **7. What is need?**

Need means the basic items a person must have to live in health and decency. The items considered essential are shelter, food, clothing, personal and household needs, fuel, lights, refrigeration, and medical care.

## **8. How is need determined?**

Need is determined by the money cost of these items in adequate amounts. Standard money amounts for food, clothing, personal, and household essentials have been scientifically set for each person con-

sidering sex, age, activity, and size of the family. Shelter, fuel, lights, and refrigeration are allowed in an amount proportioned to the blind person's share of the household expenses.

## **9. How is the amount of grant determined?**

The amount of the grant is determined by the difference between the income and/or other resources and the amount of money that has been determined to be necessary to maintain a person in health and decency. There is no maximum limitation on the amount of the grant in Aid to the Blind.

## **10. Can a person have some savings and still receive aid?**

Yes. A single person may have as much as \$2,000 in savings, stocks, bonds, cash surrender value of life insurance, or land contracts; and a husband and wife may have up to \$4,000 in these items together. Household goods, home furniture, wearing apparel, and a burial lot are exempted in determining need.

## **11. Is ownership of real property a bar to eligibility?**

**No. Not if the property is being used as a homestead, regardless of its value.**

## **12. Are relatives expected to help support a blind person?**

**Yes. Both by custom and by law, relatives are expected to contribute toward a needy blind person's support. The law names the parent, spouse, or child of a recipient as the relatives legally liable for support if they are able to provide it.**

## **13. What is meant by rehabilitation?**

**Rehabilitation consists of helping an applicant or recipient of employable age with the selection of a trade or vocation and assisting him in obtaining the education or training that is deemed necessary or advisable for such an occupation. Placement in employment is the goal of rehabilitation for every employable blind person. The employable applicant for Aid to the Blind must be willing to cooperate in accepting rehabilitation service that is reasonably suitable and available.**

## **14. Where may the blind person receive expert help with rehabilitation?**

State Services for the Blind and your local county welfare department provide services.

## **15. How long is it before the first assistance payment is made?**

It should not require longer than 60 days.

## **16. How is an applicant informed of the action on his application?**

The decision of the county welfare board is given in writing and includes the reason for the board's action.

## **17. What can a person do who is not satisfied with the action taken?**

He should first discuss the matter with his county welfare board, asking for an explanation of the reason for its decision. If such explanation does not satisfy the applicant, he may then sign a notice of

appeal to the Department of Public Welfare for a hearing on his case. The State Appeals Referee will conduct the hearing and render a decision in writing. Further appeal may be made to the District and Supreme Courts.

## **18. Is a recipient of Aid to the Blind responsible for reporting income and need?**

Yes. Prompt report of changes in income and living circumstances is required by law.

## **19. May a person work and receive aid?**

Yes. The first \$90 of earned monthly income plus one-half of earned monthly income in excess of \$90 is disregarded in determining need. A second method, called the self-support plan, permits exemption of earned and unearned income for a designated period, with a goal of financial independence.

## **20. How long is assistance provided?**

As long as the need continues and as long as the recipient continues to meet the requirements of eligibility.

## **21. What other services are available to a blind person?**

**In addition to financial aid, visually handicapped persons may apply for vocational rehabilitation services, home teaching services, consultative services for parents of blind children, sight conservation for persons in need of medical eye care who are unable to provide it for themselves, talking book library services, tape recordings, Braille publications, special transportation fare privileges, white canes, tax exemption certificates, and fishing licenses.**

**Information on these additional services may be obtained from your local welfare office or by writing Services for the Blind, Department of Public Welfare, Centennial Office Building, St. Paul, Minnesota, 55101.**

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