

Reasons for Decision:

Order # 1516-401

The appellant appealed that the appellant was not reimbursed the full amount spent for an eye exam and purchase of prescription glasses.

The appellant submitted a receipt for an eye exam in the amount of **<amount removed>**. The Employment and Income Assistance Program reimbursed the appellant **\$44.25** which is the maximum amount allowable, and is equivalent to the amount that Manitoba Health pays for eye examination coverage.

The appellant submitted a copy of a relative's **<reference removed>** bill which showed a purchase of on-line glasses in the amount of **<amount removed>**. The program did not reimburse anything for this purchase. The program stated that it had an agreement with the Opticians' Association of Manitoba. The proper process for coverage for any optical needs is to have the service provider contact the Provincial Optical Services Program to determine the level of coverage available. The optical program will pay the provider directly, and costs above the amount payable would be the responsibility of the EIA participant. The program indicated that as the glasses were purchased in a relative's name, and was not purchased through a business located in Manitoba, they could not reimburse the appellant. The Department stated that the actual cost of glasses that would be covered by the Health Services program ranged from \$70 to \$100.

The Department provided the Board with a step by step instruction sheet on how persons on income assistance should apply for optical benefits. However, the program also acknowledged that the appellant was never provided with this information. The appellant also stated that the appellant did not call the worker to ask what the proper procedure was, or the maximum amounts that would be allowed. The appellant stated that the appellant bought the glasses using the cheapest method that the appellant could find. As the appellant did not have a credit card, the appellant's relative offered to let the appellant use the relative's credit card. The appellant stated that the appellant paid the relative back and has a receipt for **<amount removed>**.

After carefully considering all the written and verbal information the Board has determined that the appellant should be entitled to coverage for the glasses. The Board understands that coverage for a regular pair of prescription glasses is typically covered up to a maximum of about \$100. As the appellant was never advised what the rules are for obtaining glasses, the Board does not feel the appellant should be penalized for not following them. The appellant should be entitled to what any other Manitoban on income assistance would be entitled to regardless of who the service provider is. Similarly, the Board agrees that the appellant should only be entitled to reimbursement of the \$44.25 for the eye exam as this is the amount that other Manitobans on income assistance are entitled to. Therefore the decision of the director has been rescinded and the Board orders the program to reimburse the appellant the **<amount removed>** spent on glasses.

One member has dissented on this decision as they believe that the appellant had a responsibility to ask the worker what the appellant's entitlement to optical benefits was prior to making a purchase.