

**Reasons for Decision:**

**Order # AP1718-0178**

The appellant appealed that the appellant was deemed not eligible for the Rewarding Work Volunteer Benefit (RVB).

The program received a volunteer plan from a Community Health Centre as the appellant planned to volunteer there. The appellant also attends medical related appointments within the same centre. The program advised the appellant that the appellant would not be eligible as their policy does not allow RVB benefits if you're involved in any capacity with the same agency. The program received a volunteer log sheet showing that the appellant volunteered one to three days at the centre; however there was no month listed. The log sheet also noted that the appellant is still volunteering with the agency. The appellant was advised that RVB would not be issued as the appellant was actively engaged with services at the same agency.

The appellant attended the hearing with a friend who presented on the appellant's behalf. The friend confirmed that the appellant receives services from the agency, and began volunteering with the agency in <date removed>. The agency is an extremely large organization, and the appellant's friend does not understand how receiving services from an entity disqualifies one from receiving RVB as long as there is no conflict of interest. The friend advised that the appellant has <text removed> which make it very hard to adjust in unknown circumstances. This agency provides medical care to the appellant in a completely separate area from the community outreach area in which the appellant volunteers by assisting with mail and flyers.

The Manitoba Assistance Regulation, Schedule A Sections 12 (1) and 12 (2) states:

12(1) Subject to subsection (2), a person receiving a benefit set out in clause [5\(c\)](#) of this Schedule is entitled to the following payments for participating in volunteer activities:

- a. \$50 per month if he or she engages in volunteer activities at least four and no more than seven times each month;
- b. \$100 per month if he or she engages in volunteer activities eight times or more each month.

12(2) A person is not entitled to benefits under this section

- a. for volunteer activities arising out of an approved employability enhancement measure;
- b. if the person receives any financial compensation for performing the volunteer activities; or

- c. if the person is receiving services under the marketAbilities, Supported Living or Vocational Rehabilitation programs operated by the department or any other government-funded program designed to prepare a person for employment.

Further to Schedule A Section 12 the program provided a supplement Circular 2009-02 to further clarify eligibility requirements for the Rewarding Volunteer's Benefit (RVB). Additionally, amounts available under the RVB are to be provided to eligible participants with disabilities only upon the completion of an approved Volunteer Plan.

#### Clarification – Eligible Volunteer Placements

Volunteer placements that are considered eligible for the RVB will:

- be recurring in nature (i.e. a minimum of four volunteer days per month);
- take place in community-based, not-for-profit agencies;
- provide no financial compensation to participants for their activities;
- not be in exchange for any services that participants may be receiving from the agency in which they volunteer; and
- be completely voluntary in nature and not tied to any engagement/participation, employability/employment, or education/training-related service planning processes that participants may be involved in with other government, Regional Health Authority (RHA) or community-based programs. In such instances, funds required to support participation in these plans are the responsibility of the service provider, or may be incorporated into monthly income assistance budgets where allowed under current policy.

After carefully considering all the written and verbal evidence the Board believes that the Rewarding Volunteer Benefit Policy has enough flexibility built into it that the Director can review individual circumstances and assess an income assistance recipient's actual needs. The Board finds that the policy does not pertain to the appellant's specific circumstances and is satisfied that the appellant's service to the agency is in no way related to the health services the appellant receives from the same agency. The Board therefore orders the program to enrol the appellant in the Rewarding Volunteer Benefit Program effective <date removed>.

#### **DISCLAIMER**

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