

Reasons for Decision:

Order # AP1718-0752

The appellant appealed that their health telephone allowance and bus pass funds were removed from their budget.

The issue on the health telephone allowance was resolved prior to the hearing, therefore hearing was held on bus pass allowance only.

The Department advised that the appellant was approved for the bus pass allowance from <date removed> to <date removed>. The benefit was further extended to <date removed>, as the appellant was not given a reminder that their funds would be reviewed. The extension was approved in order to provide the appellant sufficient time to submit a medical letter confirming the continued need for a health bus pass allowance.

The Department requires confirmation of the approximate number of monthly medically related appointments the appellant attends in order to assess eligibility. The Department received a letter from the appellant's psychiatrist dated <date removed>. The doctor advised that the appellant remains under their care. In <date removed>, they had written a letter to support the continuance of the bus pass allowance. This was approved by the Department. The doctor confirms that the appellant continues to require a bus pass for medical reasons so they are able to attend appointments. The doctor further encourages the appellant's engagement in Exposure Therapy, which includes being in social situations such as riding the bus.

The Department denied the request as transportation allowance is only issued for medical appointments, not social outings. A letter was sent to the appellant on <date removed> advising of the decision, as the doctor did not quantify the approximate monthly medical appointments.

At the hearing, the Department representative stated the previous bus pass allowance, issued to the appellant, by a different regional office, was granted to them in error.

The appellant expressed to the Board that not having adequate bus pass access is very isolating for them. Having to then request tickets for each of their appointments increases their anxiety and makes it more difficult to go out. The appellant believes the entire process creates barriers for participants with mental issues.

The Manitoba Assistance Regulation Schedule A, division 3, Section 9, Health Care Expenses specifies that:

emergency transportation and other expenses as may be authorized by the director and which, in the director's opinion, are necessary to provide the care, treatment or attention required.

After carefully considering the written and verbal information, the Board has determined that the Department has appropriately considered the appellant's eligibility for a monthly bus pass. The Department requires specific information when authorizing a monthly bus pass as legislation only allows transportation allowance for medical needs. The Board found the appellant's request to be more of a social need than a medical need. The Board was not presented with any confirmation from medical professionals to warrant additional transportation funds in order to equal a full monthly bus pass. Therefore, the decision of the Director has been confirmed and this appeal is dismissed.

One Board member dissents and finds that the psychiatrist's letter outlining the reasons for the bus pass allowance meets the requirements for getting a bus pass.

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