

# **PORTABLE HOUSING BENEFIT**

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

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<b>SUBJECT</b> INTRODUCTION	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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## **PROGRAM BACKGROUND**

The Portable Housing Benefit (PHB) is a rent supplement, accompanied by housing supports, for low-income individuals with a mental health disability who have an unstable housing situation that is interfering with their progress in recovery and/or positive participation in community life.

The combination of a rent supplement and housing supports is intended to provide better access to the private rental market. Recipients are required to accept the housing supports to maximize the success of their tenancy.

The PHB is “portable”, as it is attached to the individual not the rental unit.

An unstable housing situation is defined as an accommodation that is: unsafe, not affordable, negatively impacting an individual’s tenancy, or interfering with the individual’s progress in mental health recovery and/or positive participation in community life.

The target population for the PHB is Employment and Income Assistance participants who are enrolled on the basis of a mental health disability.

The PHB is delivered by designated community mental health service providers.

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

The purpose of the PHB Policy and Procedures Manual is to outline the policies that govern the program and to provide general procedural guidance that will support and assist those who are responsible for delivering and evaluating the Portable Housing Benefit.

The manual will be shared with mental health service providers, delivery agents and government partners as deemed necessary.

Information within the manual can be found by using the table of contents which is located at the beginning of the manual.

<b>SECTION 1</b> POLICY MANUAL	<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>SUBJECT 1.2</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> DEFINITIONS	<b>PAGE 1 OF 2</b>	
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<b>Applicant</b>	a person who applies for the PHB
<b>Application</b>	the official PHB application form that is submitted to Provincial Services for payment of benefits (see Section 2, Appendix 5.2)
<b>Appeals</b>	an informal process established by each PHB service provider to review decisions made with regard to the eligibility of an applicant for the PHB. Appeals will be reviewed by an individual or individuals, designated by the service provider, who were not involved in the original decision
<b>Employment and Income Assistance (EIA)</b>	a provincial program that provides financial assistance to help meet basic personal and family needs
<b>Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) Shelter Allowance</b>	the amount of assistance provided by EIA for rent
<b>Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) Shelter Guidelines</b>	the guidelines for the amount of assistance provided by EIA for rent
<b>Evaluation</b>	a formal review of the PHB by a person or persons engaged by the Province of Manitoba to determine whether the program is meeting objectives, and following policies and procedures
<b>Financial Reporting Requirements</b>	the information that a Service Provider is required to report to the Province of Manitoba on a monthly or annual basis, as outlined in the Service Purchase agreement
<b>Mental Health Disability</b>	the determination of the EIA Medical Panel that an individual is eligible for EIA on the basis of a mental health disability
<b>Portable Housing Benefit (PHB)</b>	the benefit established by the Province of Manitoba to provide housing supports, combined with a rent supplement, to low-income individuals with a mental health disability and an unstable housing situation

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<b>PHB Payment</b>	the PHB rent supplement paid to an eligible recipient on a monthly basis
<b>PHB Recipient</b>	a person who is eligible for and in receipt of the PHB
<b>PHB Service Provider</b>	the mental health service provider contracted to deliver the PHB on behalf of the Province of Manitoba
<b>PHB Support Worker</b>	a person who administers the PHB, and provides housing supports, on behalf of a PHB Service Provider
<b>Rent</b>	the actual rent paid to a landlord for private market rental accommodation
<b>Service Purchase Agreement</b>	the agreement between a mental health service provider and the Province of Manitoba pertaining to the delivery of the PHB
<b>Unstable Housing Situation</b>	housing that is unsafe, not affordable, negatively impacting an individual's tenancy, or interfering with the individual's progress in mental health recovery and/or positive participation in community life.

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<b>SUBJECT</b> BENEFIT CALCULATION	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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The PHB is a monthly benefit that combines a rent supplement with housing support services.

The amount of the PHB is the difference between the monthly amount provided for rent by Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) and the client’s actual rent, up to a maximum of \$200.00.

<u>Example #1</u>	<u>Example #2</u>
\$450.00 actual monthly rent	\$500.00 actual monthly rent
\$285.00 EIA rental allowance	\$285.00 EIA rental allowance
\$165.00 PHB amount	\$200.00 PHB amount

### **Sharing Accommodation**

PHB recipients who are sharing accommodation will have their PHB calculated on their portion of the rent.

For example, if two people are sharing an apartment where the rent is \$800 per month, each person’s share of the rent would be \$400. If the PHB tenant received \$285 from EIA for rent, the PHB for this person would be calculated as:

$$\$400 \text{ actual rent} - \$285 \text{ EIA rental allowance} = \$115 \text{ PHB}$$

If both tenants are eligible for the PHB, both should be enrolled so that they are both entitled to PHB payments if the shared living arrangement breaks down.

<b>SECTION 1</b> POLICY MANUAL	<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>SUBJECT 1.4</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> INCOME TAX IMPLICATIONS	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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The PHB is considered to be non-taxable income for income tax purposes.

In January or February, PHB recipients will receive a Benefit Statement which will show the total amount of PHB received during the previous tax year.

The PHB is reported on the Manitoba Tax Credits form of the Income Tax Return and will reduce the amount of Manitoba Tax Credits received.

<b>SECTION 1</b> POLICY MANUAL	<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>SUBJECT 1.5</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> SCREENING COMMITTEE	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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PHB service providers will establish a Screening Committee to review applications for the Portable Housing Benefit. The committee may include representatives from the regional health authority, community mental health agencies, and government programs, such as EIA and Housing.

The purpose of the committee is to determine the eligibility of applicants for the PHB, in accordance with established policies and procedures. As the number of PHB rent supplements is limited, the Screening Committee should determine which applicants are the best candidates for the PHB.



<b>SECTION 1</b> POLICY MANUAL	<b>SECTION</b> <b>1</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b> <b>1.6</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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Applicants are eligible for the PHB if they meet the following criteria:

- are receiving EIA as a person with a mental health disability (full or partial benefits),
- are receiving ongoing housing supports or case management services from a designated mental health service provider while in receipt of the PHB,
- have an unstable housing situation, and
- are residing in a private market rental unit.

### **Unstable/Unsustainable Housing Situations**

The PHB **must** not be approved to support housing situations that are considered by the Screening Committee to be unstable or unsustainable. Examples are living situations that are not conducive to the recipient's recovery or financially unstable situations where the rent is well in excess of the recipient's ability to pay the difference from other sources of income on a long-term basis.

<b>SECTION 1</b> POLICY MANUAL	<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>SUBJECT 1.7</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> INELIGIBILITY	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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Applicants or recipients will no longer be eligible for the PHB if they:

- are no longer receiving EIA benefits or EIA benefits cease,
- are not engaged in ongoing supports with a PHB service provider,
- cease to engage in ongoing supports with a PHB service provider for a period in excess of 30 days,
- have vacated their rental unit for period in excess of 30 days (without prior approval from the PHB worker, in consultation with the EIA Case Coordinator, for such reasons as hospitalization or treatment),
- reside in or move to a housing unit owned by Manitoba Housing,
- are deceased, or
- leave the province.

Applicants who are receiving EIA Health Benefits only are not eligible for the PHB but may apply for benefits under the **RentAid** Disability component.

### **Temporary Case Closures**

Eligibility for the PHB ceases when a recipient's EIA case is closed. An EIA case may be closed temporarily, if the recipient has excess income due to the receipt of a lump sum payment from sources such as Employment Insurance or the Canada Pension Plan. These cases are usually re-opened when the excess income has been depleted.

If it is expected that an EIA case will be closed temporarily, the PHB suspend PHB payments and hold the supplement until the recipient is still eligible for the PHB, the service provider **must** advise Provincial can recommence.

<b>SECTION 1</b> POLICY MANUAL	<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>SUBJECT 1.8</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> SUBSIDIZED HOUSING TENANTS	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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Individuals are not eligible for the PHB if they reside in Manitoba Housing (public housing)

Generally, clients are encouraged to remain in Manitoba Housing. However, if an individual's housing situation is not safe, is impacting negatively on an applicant's tenancy or interfering with the applicant's progress in recovery, the information **must** be brought forward to an EIA supervisor for consideration prior to approving the move.

### **Subsidized Housing**

The PHB is for individuals living in private rental accommodation, which includes private non-profit housing that is subsidized by Manitoba Housing. These units may have rents below the median market rent but still well in excess of the EJA rental allowance. Tenants of these units are not eligible for the **RentAid**.

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<b>SUBJECT</b> DAMAGE OR SECURITY DEPOSITS	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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PHB recipients are eligible for a damage or security deposit up to half the actual rent. EIA is responsible for approving and issuing damage/security deposits. If the recipient requires a second or subsequent damage deposit, EIA will recover the subsequent damage deposit from the recipient's EIA benefits.

Applicants or recipients who are moving into different accommodation are eligible for assistance from EIA for moving costs and may be eligible for start-up costs. These costs must be discussed with the EIA worker prior to the move.

<b>SECTION 1</b> POLICY MANUAL	<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>SUBJECT 1.10</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> UNIT HEALTH AND SAFETY CHECKLIST	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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The Unit Health and Safety Checklist is a tool to be used to ensure that PHB recipients are securing housing that meets minimum health and safety requirements.

The checklist should be completed by the PHB recipient, with assistance from the PHB service provider, and submitted with the application for PHB.

**Note: This requirement is currently waived as the checklist is still under development.**

<b>SECTION 1</b> POLICY MANUAL	<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>SUBJECT 1.11</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> EIA FINANCIAL RESOURCE EXEMPTION	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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The PHB is exempt from consideration as a financial resource in the calculation of EIA benefits.

<b>SECTION 1</b> POLICY MANUAL	<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>SUBJECT 1.12</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> INFORMATION SHARING	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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An information sharing agreement is under development.

<b>SECTION 1</b> POLICY MANUAL	<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>SUBJECT 1.13</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> REPORTING REQUIREMENTS-SERVICE PROVIDERS	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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Reporting requirements for PHB service providers are outlined in the Service Purchase Agreement between the service provider and the Province of Manitoba. These requirements include:

1. the preparation and provision of reports and financial statements in accordance with Manitoba's Financial Reporting Requirements,
2. providing information on recipients and the administration of the PHB on a monthly basis, and as required, for monitoring, policy development and evaluation purposes; and
3. reviewing the situation of recipients annually and providing a report supporting the continuation of the benefit.

More information on these requirements is provided in Section 2.



<b>SECTION 1</b> POLICY MANUAL	<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>SUBJECT 1.14</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> APPEALS	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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PHB service providers are required to establish an appeal process to address situations where a PHB applicant does not agree with a decision to deny, suspend or terminate the PHB.

Appeals **must** be reviewed by an individual or individuals who were not involved in the original decision.

<b>SECTION 1</b> POLICY MANUAL	<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>SUBJECT 1.15</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> PROGRAM EVALUATION	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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Evaluations of the PHB will be conducted from time to time to ensure that the program is meeting its objectives and provide recommendations for improvement.

Service providers are expected to engage in the evaluation process and provide all required information.

<b>SECTION 2</b> PROCEDURES MANUAL	<b>SECTION</b> <b>2</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b> <b>1.1</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> APPLICATION PROCESS	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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Application intake and eligibility assessment are the responsibility of the PHB service provider and the Screening Committee.

The Screening Committee may include representatives from the regional health authority, community mental health agencies and government programs, such as EIA and Housing. The committee will meet on a regular basis to determine eligibility of PHB applicants.

If an applicant is under the care of the Public Trustee, the PHB service provider **must** ensure that the Public Trustee is aware of the application for PHB, prior to submitting the application to the Screening Committee for review.

If eligibility is approved, the service provider will complete a PHB application form with the applicant and forward it to Provincial Services to initiate payment (see application form in Appendix 5.2).

PHB payments are administered by the Provincial Services, who will issue an approval letter to the recipient and the service provider (see letters in Appendixes 5.5 and 5.6). An email will also be sent to the EIA worker.

**Note:** Where the actual monthly rent amount provided on the PHB application is found by Provincial Services to be different than the actual monthly rent amount indicated in SAMIN, Provincial Services will notify the PHB service provider who is responsible for contacting the EIA worker to determine the correct amount. The PHB service provider will provide this information to Provincial Services.

See Appendix 5.1 for more information on the application process.

<b>SECTION 2</b> PROCEDURES MANUAL	<b>SECTION</b> <b>2</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b> <b>1.2</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> SECURING A LEASE	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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The PHB service provider is responsible for assisting the client in securing appropriate housing. This might include negotiating with the landlord on behalf of the client when necessary. To assist in the process, the service provider can also issue a letter of reference.

The letter of reference should include information that will demonstrate to the landlord that the client has the means to pay the actual rent in full.

When tenancy has been secured, the EIA worker and Provincial Services **must** be advised.

<b>SECTION 2</b> PROCEDURES MANUAL	<b>SECTION</b> <b>2</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b> <b>1.3</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> TERMINATING A LEASE	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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PHB recipients must follow all requirements under *The Residential Tenancies Act* if they decide to move. This includes providing written notice to the landlord when terminating a lease.

<b>SECTION 2</b> PROCEDURES MANUAL	<b>SECTION</b> <b>2</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b> <b>1.4</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> REPORTING CHANGES	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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The PHB service provider **must** ensure that changes in recipients' circumstances that could affect their continued eligibility or benefits under the PHB are reported to the EIA worker and Provincial Services as soon as possible.

### **Unstable/Unsustainable Housing Situation**

The PHB **must** not be approved to support housing situations that are considered by the Screening Committee to be unstable or unsustainable. Examples are living situations that are not conducive to the recipient's recovery or financially unstable situations where the rent is well in excess of the recipient's ability to pay the difference from other sources of income on a long-term basis.

<b>SECTION 2</b> PROCEDURES MANUAL	<b>SECTION</b> <b>2</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b> <b>1.5</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> INELIGIBILITY PROCESS	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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If the PHB service provider determines that an applicant is ineligible for the PHB, the service provider **must** inform the applicant immediately.

If a PHB recipient is no longer eligible, as defined in Section 1 of the Policy Manual, the service provider **must**:

- Advise the EIA worker and Provincial Services that the recipient is no longer eligible for the PHB.
- Provincial Services will be responsible for sending a letter to all parties advising of the ineligibility (see letters in Appendixes 5.7 and 5.8).
- The letter will include an application for **RentAid** if the recipient is no longer receiving EIA benefits.

Persons who apply for the P1-1B and are determined to be ineligible at the onset can be referred by the service provider to other housing subsidy programs, such as **RentAid**, or be provided with other housing options, such as subsidized housing.

<b>SECTION 2</b> PROCEDURES MANUAL-BENEFITS	<b>SECTION</b> <b>2</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b> <b>2.1</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> PAYMENT PROCESS	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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Three payment options are available for the PHB. The option chosen **must** reflect where the recipient is in the recovery process and be the most beneficial to the client.

*OPTION 1*

The PHB can be payable to the recipient and mailed to the recipient at the end of every month **for the following month's rent.**

*OPTION 2*

The PHB can also be payable to the recipient and mailed to the service provider. This option can assist in ensuring the client is engaging with the service provider on a regular basis.

*OPTION 3*

The PHB can be payable directly to the landlord on behalf of the recipient.

**Recipients choosing Option 3 must indicate on the PHB application that they authorize the payment of the PHB directly to the landlord (see the Payment Section on the PHB application in Appendix 5.2).**



<b>SECTION 2</b> PROCEDURES MANUAL-BENEFITS	<b>SECTION</b> <b>2</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b> <b>2.2</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME ASSISTANCE SHELTER GUIDELINES	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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The following EIA rental guidelines rates are used in the calculation of the PHB.

The same rates will be used if the recipient is working and receiving partial EIA benefits.

### **EIA Shelter Guidelines for Private Market Rentals**

<b>Family Size</b>	<b>Basic Rent (no utilities)</b>	<b>Rent (including all utilities)</b>
<b>1 person</b>	\$243	\$285
<b>2 persons</b>	\$285	\$387
<b>3 persons</b>	\$310	\$430
<b>4 persons</b>	\$351	\$471
<b>5 persons</b>	\$371	\$488
<b>6 persons</b>	\$387	\$513

<b>SECTION 2</b> PHB PROCEDURES MANUAL	<b>SECTION</b> <b>2</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b> <b>3.1</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> ANNUAL REAPPLICATION PROCESS	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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In order to ensure continued eligibility for the PHB, recipients are required to reapply for the PHB on an annual basis.

Provincial Services will notify the service provider when the recipient needs to reapply, based on the enrolment date. Renewals and accompanying reporting documents (see Appendix 5.4) will be sent to the service provider approximately two months prior to the annual renewal date.

Once the reapplication form is completed, the PHB service provider must return the form **along with a copy of the original PHB application** to Provincial Services to ensure that there is no disruption in benefits.

When processed, Provincial Services will send a letter to the PHB service provider and the recipient to advise that the application has been renewed for an additional twelve months.

If a reapplication is not submitted to Provincial Services for a PHB recipient, benefits will cease based on the annual date.

Provincial Services will review late renewals as they are received. The Director of Provincial Services will make decisions with regard to the payment of retroactive benefits.

<b>SECTION 2</b> PROCEDURES MANUAL	<b>SECTION</b> <b>2</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b> <b>4.1</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> FINANCIAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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The PHB service provider will provide financial information in accordance with the Financial Reporting Requirements in the Service Purchase Agreement.

<b>SECTION 2</b> PROCEDURES MANUAL	<b>SECTION</b> <b>2</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b> <b>4.2</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> MONTHLY AND ANNUAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS	<b>PAGE 1 OF 1</b>	
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The service provider will provide monthly and annual reports to the Province as required.

The Monthly Reporting Form must be submitted to Manitoba Housing and Community Development at the end of each month. The form and instructions are provided in Appendices 5.9 and 5.10.