



GRANTS AND EMERGENCY AID

Grants

The Child Care and Protection Act provides for five types of grants:

- (1) state maintenance grant
- (2) foster parent grant
- (3) residential child care facility grant
- (4) child disability grant
- (5) short-term emergency grant or assistance in kind.

State maintenance grant

Under the previous rules, only a parent of a child could apply for a grant. The parent was eligible for a grant only if the other parent is deceased, in prison for longer than three months, or receiving an old age pension or disability grant.

Under the Child Care and Protection Act, the state maintenance grant is available to a broader group of persons caring for a child, provided that they meet the grant criteria. This means that the grant application can come from a parent, a legal guardian, a registered kinship care-giver, a child heading a recognised child-headed household or an adult assigned to supervise such a child-headed household. There is no limit to the number of children in a single household who may receive a state maintenance grant, since all children must be treated equally. The other grant criteria will be set in regulations, to allow for flexibility over time.

Key change: One key change to the law is allowing registered kinship care-givers to apply for state maintenance grants for the children in their care. Previously, this was possible only if they were formally designated as foster parents by a court order – a burdensome process which has tied up social workers and the children's courts unnecessarily.

Foster parent grant

A foster parent is eligible to claim a grant for each child placed in his or her care by a court order. This grant is intended to offset the costs of caring for a foster child, keeping in mind that foster care involves caring for an unrelated child. In terms of the Act, foster parents play a similar role as children's homes by taking in children who have no family members to care for them.

Residential child care facility grant

Approved places of safety, registered children's homes and registered child detention centres are eligible to claim a grant for each child placed in their care by court order.

Child disability grant

A child may be eligible for a child disability grant if the child has one of the disabilities prescribed in the regulations. A child disability grant is payable *in addition* to any other state grant, and it is paid until the child is old enough to qualify for a disability grant under the National Pensions Act 10 of 1992.

Short-term emergency grant or assistance in kind

The Ministry responsible for child welfare may provide short-term emergency grants or assistance in kind to families in particular need, such as children in homes affected by illness, accident, death, fire, natural disasters, armed conflict or some other unexpected emergency. For example, emergency aid might be provided to a family whose house has just burned down or a family where both parents were killed in a car accident.

Automatic exemptions

Any child who receives a state maintenance grant, or who has been placed in alternative care by a court order, is entitled to free basic education in state schools; subsidised school uniforms, shoes and stationary; free basic health care; and exemption from payment of any fees when applying for official government documents.

Abuse of grant money

It is a crime to receive grant money for a child under false pretences (such as where a person receives money for a child who is not actually in their care), or to use grant money for something other than the child's benefit (such as using the money for drinking or gambling). Anyone who suspects fraud or abuse can ask a social worker to investigate. A person who has been wrongfully receiving a grant, or misusing the money, can be ordered to refund the money to the government.