

# Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) Program



## Frequently Asked Questions

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**Everyone needs help sometimes.** Some of us need help for a few months and others need help for a longer time. Everyone's situation is different.

When you are in financial need, this program may help.

This program helps with

- basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter
- training to help you get ready for work and get a job
- special needs like child care, medicine, transportation, emergency dental care, and eye glasses

### Who can apply for Employment Support and Income Assistance?

You can apply if you

- live in Nova Scotia
- are 19 or older
- are 16, 17, or 18 under special circumstances

You must show that

- You need financial help to cover your basic needs.
- Your monthly income is less than the amount the ESIA program allows for basic expenses. This amount cannot include debts, like a credit card payment.
- You have looked for all other sources of potential income. This could include Canada Pension, spousal support, job opportunities, or Employment Insurance that may be available to you.

### How do I apply for ESIA?

Call toll-free: **1-877-424-1177**

You can also go to the nearest Community Services office and call the toll-free intake line from there Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Find your local office here: [novascotia.ca/coms/department/contact/index.html](https://novascotia.ca/coms/department/contact/index.html)

If you decide to apply, we ask you for information and documents to help us find out if you qualify. We ask you to allow us to verify the information you give us. We must verify all sources of your current income and assets. That means the money you get and some of the things that you own that are worth money. You must give us all the information we ask for. You may ask questions about the program at any time.

Learn more about the application process here:

[novascotia.ca/coms/employment/income\\_assistance/HowtoApply.html](https://novascotia.ca/coms/employment/income_assistance/HowtoApply.html)

If ESIA is not the right program to meet your needs, 211 can help you find the right program or service. The 211 information line is a free and confidential referral service. It can connect you to more than 3,000 community and social services resources across the province. It is available throughout the province – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can also search the 211 website at [ns.211.ca](http://ns.211.ca).

### How long do I have to wait to find out if I qualify?

Once staff receive and check all information and paperwork, you should find out within three business days.

### If I qualify, when will I receive my first payment?

That depends on your situation. A payment may be issued immediately or may be sent towards the end of the month.

### How do I get my assistance each month?

You may be required to fill out a form every month. The form is called an income statement. We must get your income statement before we can issue your payment. Ask our staff for more information.

### When will my payment come?

You should get it on one of the last three business days of the month. You may wish to have it paid directly into your bank account. Talk to your caseworker about arranging direct deposit.

### What benefits could I be eligible for?

If eligible, you could get money or goods or services for your basic and special needs:

- **Basic needs** – You get income support for basic food, clothing, and shelter. Shelter includes rent, mortgage, heat, and electricity.
- **Special needs** – If you have a special need, tell us. You may qualify for other support. Some examples are medical needs like eyeglasses, job needs like a uniform or safety hat, or home needs like a crib or washer.

You can find a complete list of special needs you could qualify for in the ESIA policy manual:

**[novascotia.ca/coms/employment/documents/ESIA\\_Program\\_Policy\\_Manual.pdf](http://novascotia.ca/coms/employment/documents/ESIA_Program_Policy_Manual.pdf)**

### What are the ESIA rates? How much am I eligible for?

There are limits to the financial supports available. The amount you receive depends on your individual or family circumstances. ESIA Basic Income Assistance rates are listed online:

**<https://novascotia.ca/coms/employment/basic-needs-assistance/>**

## Do I have to look for a job to stay on ESIA?

Usually you are expected to work unless special circumstances, like a medical condition, prevents you from working.

## Is there help for me to find a job or get training if I need it?

Yes, after you are getting income assistance you will receive employment help. We can help you in two ways:

- We look at your skills and abilities and how we can help you find work.
- We offer support and services to help you gain the skills you need to get a job.

## How can I access Employment Support Services (ESS)?

Talk to your Income Assistance caseworker. You must be referred to an ESS caseworker to talk about your work history, education, and training. Together you will develop an employment action plan that will help guide your return to work.

## Will I lose my ESIA if I get a job?

Not necessarily. Some services and supports help you and your family increase your household income while you work toward long-term employment. When you report your income to your caseworker, they can tell you what those supports look like for you. You can also learn more on our website:

**[novascotia.ca/coms/employment/income\\_assistance/working-while-on-income-assistance.html](https://novascotia.ca/coms/employment/income_assistance/working-while-on-income-assistance.html)**

## Will I lose my drug coverage if I get a job?

Not necessarily. If you still qualify for assistance after you get a job, then you will continue to receive drug coverage. If you no longer qualify for assistance after you get a job, you may be eligible for drug coverage for 12 months. Tell your caseworker if:

- your employer does not offer drug coverage through a private plan
- you don't qualify for employer coverage for a period of time

**We're here to help. Please reach out if you have questions or would like to learn more.**

Visit: **[novascotia.ca/coms](https://novascotia.ca/coms)**