

Chapter 6: Shelter Benefits

(III) Utilities

(a) NL Hydro and NL Power

Intent:	To describe the interaction between the Income Support Program and Newfoundland Power and Newfoundland Hydro in relation to services and supports for recipients
Act: (if applicable)	N/A
Regulations:	N/A
Overview: (if applicable)	N/A
Policy:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client Service Officers can assist recipients who experience difficulty paying their electricity bills in making arrangements with their respective electrical company to resolve the problem by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using the Equal Payment Plan (Newfoundland Power customers only) Redirecting a payment, with the consent of the recipient, from Income Support benefits directly to the power company to avoid a cut-off Assisting the recipient in finding alternate accommodations where heat and light is included in the rent. Electrical arrears shall not be paid under any circumstances. Reconnection fees cannot be paid by the Income Support Program. The use of hotel/motel accommodations for recipients whose electrical service has been disconnected is not normally permitted. Where the redirect amount is substantial and leaves the client with very little income, consult with a Client Services Manager who will discuss the case with Newfoundland Power to determine whether there can be flexibility in cases of extraordinary hardship for clients.

Procedure:

- The following options can be considered to resolve possible disconnection of electricity as a result of arrears:
 - paying arrears from personal resources such as family, friends, etc.
 - assisting the client in moving to alternate accommodations such as board and lodging or renting when electricity is included (with existing or a new landlord/landlady)
 - providing information about the Equal Payment Plan (EPP) available from Newfoundland Power
 - EPP is a standard monthly payment determined by NL Power by averaging the cost of electricity over the past twelve months.
 - It is reviewed on a six month basis - January and July - and will be adjusted in July if necessary.
 - This option makes it easier for people to plan their payments as there are no fluctuations from month to month, and there will be no cut-offs if payments are made on time.
 - For recipients living in NLHC rental units which include a heat subsidy, the Equal Payment Plan will be reduced by the amount of the heat subsidy in order to avoid accumulated credits at Newfoundland Power.
 - Any credits incurred will be refunded directly to the recipient and will not affect their Income Support benefits.
 - The CSO should advise the recipient:
 - ❖ that registration for the EPP only relates to future payments;
 - ❖ to contact Newfoundland Power and arrange for the Plan to be implemented; and
 - ❖ that a new plan is created every time a person changes residence. They should request NL Power transfer all debits/credits to the new account.
- Where a client has a signed redirect agreement with the electrical company to pay off arrears, redirect a portion of the

recipient's Income Support benefits to the electrical company on a monthly basis to address the arrears.

- Advise the client that:
 - If a reconnection fee is required, it should be negotiated between the recipient and the power company and possibly included in the debt owing to the company.
 - If they no longer qualify for Income Support and payment to the power company is interrupted before the redirect agreement expires:
 - ❖ If the client reapplies and becomes eligible for Income Support, the redirect agreement must be extended to compensate for lost payments for period equal to the interruption.
 - When signing the Redirect Agreement, they are providing consent to:
 - ❖ the power company to release the current balance owing on their account to this Department and
 - ❖ to discussing their account with a Departmental manager if an overpayment by the power company results in a significant credit balance.
- Select the "third party" pay option in CAPS to include payments going to Newfoundland Power or Newfoundland Hydro and be sure to include the recipient's account number and the Income Support district, regardless if the payment is non-recurring pay or recurring pay.

Newfoundland Power Monthly Reports

- A monthly Redirect Report is created by Provincial Office, and available in the shared directory for the Eligibility Assurance Services unit to review.

Note:

Direct payments must continue to be redirected to the power company even when the living arrangement of the recipient changes, as this is part of the contract signed by the client. Payments should continue for the period of the contract unless clients renegotiate a new contract or are no longer eligible for Income Support benefits.

Credit Collection Divisions

Newfoundland Power is centralized in St. John's and all inquiries should be forwarded to that office.

Authority Level: Client Services Office

Date revised: May 3, 2019