

Senior BENEFITS PROGRAM



March 2016 Reduction Information & Fact Sheet
Updated February 25, 2016

The Alaska Senior Benefits Payment Program was established on August 1, 2007 and pays cash benefits to Alaskans who are age 65 or older and have low to moderate income. Cash payments are \$125, \$175, or \$250 each month depending on income. Effective March 1, 2016 the Senior Benefit payment of \$125 per month will be reduced to \$47 per month due to a reduction in funding effective with the state fiscal year 2016.

Recipients

- There were 11,746 Senior Benefits recipients as of December 2015.
 - ✓ Number and percent of seniors at each payment level in December 2015.
 - ✓ \$250 – 1,613 (13.7%)
 - ✓ \$175 – 4,785 (40.7%)
 - ✓ \$125 - 5,348 (45.5%)
- Average age of recipients is 75. The maximum age is 104.
- The number of Senior Benefit cases is increasing
 - ✓ December 2015 – 11,746
 - ✓ December 2014 – 11,222
 - ✓ December 2013 – 10,954
 - ✓ December 2012 – 10,789
 - ✓ December 2011 – 10,576

Eligibility and Payment

- Eligibility and payment amount is based on gross annual income (before any deductions are taken for taxes, Medicare premiums, etc.).

Senior Household Size	Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit Effective 3/1/2015		
	\$250 monthly payment	\$175 monthly payment	\$125 monthly payment
Individual	\$11,040 (\$920 per month)	\$14,720 (\$1,227 per month)	\$25,760 (\$2,146 per month)
Married Couple	\$14,940 (\$1,245 per month)	\$19,920 (\$1,660 per month)	\$34,860 (\$2,905 per month)

- Benefit changed effective March 1, 2016 due to budget shortfall and increase in caseload

Senior Household Size	Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit Effective 3/1/2016		
	\$250 monthly payment	\$175 monthly payment	\$47 monthly payment
Individual	\$11,040 (\$920 per month)	\$14,720 (\$1,227 per month)	\$25,760 (\$2,146 per month)

Married Couple	\$14,940 (\$1,245 per month)	\$19,920 (\$1,660 per month)	\$34,860 (\$2,905 per month)
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- Income limit changed effective April 1, 2016 due to change in Federal Poverty Limit

Senior Household Size	Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit (Effective 4/1/2016)		
	\$250 monthly payment	\$175 monthly payment	\$47 monthly payment
Individual	\$11,130 (\$928 per month)	\$14,840 (\$1,237 per month)	\$25,970 (\$2,165 per month)
Married Couple	\$15,015 (\$1,252 per month)	\$20,020 (\$1,669 per month)	\$35,035 (\$2,9209 per month)

- Income limits may change yearly along with Alaska's federal poverty level. The \$250, \$175, and \$125 monthly payments correspond to 75 percent, 100 percent, and 175 percent of the federal poverty level for Alaska, respectively.
- Assets, such as savings, are not counted for eligibility.
- Payments are not available to seniors living in the following institutions:
 - ✓ Prison or jail,
 - ✓ Nursing home,
 - ✓ Alaska Pioneers' Home or Alaska Veterans' Home, or
 - ✓ Public or private institution for mental disease

Evolution of the Senior Benefits Program	
1972 - 2003	Alaska Longevity Bonus Program. The Alaska Longevity Bonus Program was established in 1972. Alaska residents became eligible upon reaching the age of 65. \$250/month was issued to seniors who applied before 1994, \$200 to those applying in 1994, \$150 to those applying in 1995, and \$100 to those applying in 1996. Payments were not available to seniors who applied after 1996. The program was subsequently defunded in 2003, and final benefits were issued for the month of August 2003.
2003 - 2004	Senior Assistance Program. Beginning September 2003, the Governor's office used its executive authority to establish the needs-based Senior Assistance program in response to the needs of low-income Alaskans aged 65 and older who were financially impacted by the elimination of the Alaska Longevity Bonus. Payments were limited to \$120/month. The program ended March 2004.
2004 - 2007	SeniorCare Program. Beginning April 2004, the SeniorCare Program was established to replace the former Senior Assistance Program. The new program was expanded to include a prescription drug benefit. Low-income seniors that passed the program's income and resource limits could choose to receive either a \$120/month payment or a prescription drug benefit. The program ended July 2007.
2007 - Present	Senior Benefits Program. Beginning August 2007, the Senior Benefits Program was established to replace the SeniorCare Program. The program provides three payment levels that are based on the senior's gross annual income. Income limits are tied to the Federal Poverty Guidelines for Alaska and change each year as the poverty level changes. There is no asset test. Regulation change finalized January 2016 described how benefits would be reduced by appropriation shortfall. Due to caseload increase, the highest income level that normally receives a \$125 benefit had the benefit reduced to \$47 effective March 1, 2016.