



Senior BENEFITS PROGRAM

Information & Fact Sheet
Updated February 8, 2017

Overview

The Alaska Senior Benefits Payment Program pays monthly cash benefits to Alaskans who are age 65 or older and have low to moderate income. Payment levels depend on available state funding and how many people apply and qualify for the program. If the state budget cannot support the original amounts of \$125, \$175 and \$250, regulations allow for changes to be made for all eligible program participants. Cuts come from the highest income tier first, then the second, then the third.

Eligibility and Payment

- Eligibility and payment amount is based on gross annual income (before any deductions are taken for taxes, Medicare premiums, etc.).
- Assets, such as savings, are not counted.
- Income limits may change yearly along with Alaska's federal poverty level. The \$250, \$175, and \$76 monthly payments correspond to 75 percent, 100 percent, and 175 percent of the federal poverty level for Alaska, respectively.
- Payments are not available to seniors living in the following institutions:
 - ✓ Prison or jail
 - ✓ A nursing home
 - ✓ Alaska Pioneers' Home or Alaska Veterans' Home
 - ✓ Public or private institution for mental disease

Senior Household Size	Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit Effective 8/1/2016		
	*Benefit change effective August 1, 2016 based on FY2017 appropriation		
	\$250 monthly payment	\$175 monthly payment	*\$76 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 (\$2,920 per month)

Senior Household Size	Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit Effective 4/1/2016		
	The income limit changed April 1, 2016 due to a change in the Federal Poverty Limit		
	\$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)

* Due to a technical difficulty changing the benefit amount for the highest income tier, some seniors who were due to receive \$47 per month in April received \$125. To compensate, those that received the incorrect amount received \$8 per month in May and June

Senior Household Size	Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit Effective 3/1/2016 *Benefit change effective March 1, 2016 due to budget shortfall, caseload increase		
	\$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)

Senior Benefits recipients as of December 2016

- 11,631 recipients. Number and percent of seniors at each payment level:
 - ✓ \$250 – 1,676 (14.4%)
 - ✓ \$175 – 4,976 (42.8%)
 - ✓ \$76 – 4,979 (42.8%)
- Average age of recipients is 75. The maximum age is 102.
- The number of Senior Benefits cases has increased over the last several years. There seems to be a slight decrease this year. All figures are from the month of December:
 - ✓ 2016 – 11,629
 - ✓ 2015 – 11,746
 - ✓ 2014 – 11,222
 - ✓ 2013 – 10,954
 - ✓ 2012 – 10,789
 - ✓ 2011 – 10,576

Recipients statewide as of December 2016:

Census Area	Number of Recipients	Census Area	Number of Recipients
ALEUTIANS EAST	25	MAT-SU	1,585
ALEUTIANS WEST	34	NOME	246
ANCHORAGE	4,219	NORTH SLOPE	38
BETHEL	539	NW ARCTIC	171
BRISTOL BAY	11	PETERSBURG	93
DENALI	17	PRINCE OF WALES	214
DILLINGHAM	121	SE FAIRBANKS	212
FAIRBANKS N STAR	901	SITKA	106
HAINES	79	SKAGWAY	8
HOONAH-ANGOON	89	VALDEZ/CORDOVA	165
JUNEAU	360	WADE HAMPTON	340
KENAI	1,161	WRANGELL	86
KETCHIKAN GATEWAY	278	YAKUTAT	15
KODIAK	228	YUKON KOYUKUK	252
LAKE AND PENINSULA	38	Grand Total	11,631

History of the Senior Benefits Program	
1972 - 2003	<p>Alaska Longevity Bonus Program. Established in 1972. Alaska residents became eligible at age 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.</p>
2003 - 2004	<p>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.</p>
2004 - 2007	<p>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.</p>
2007 - present	<p>Senior Benefits Program. Established to replace the SeniorCare Program. Began August 2007; up for reauthorization in June 2018. Provides three payment levels 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The budget for state fiscal year 2017 allows full payment to the two lower income tiers and a monthly payment of \$76 to recipients in the highest income level based on appropriation and caseload size. Legislation added US citizenship requirements to the program.</p>