



**Chapter:** 500 – Community Services

**Section:**

**Subject:** Financial Access and Inclusion Policy

<b>Board Resolution:</b>	<b>Established</b> September 1, 2024	<b>Revised</b> 04/18/2024
	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Date:</b>

## **POLICY:**

### **PURPOSE:**

Community Services Access & Inclusion policy is to provide opportunities for RDCK families and individuals who are facing financial barriers to participate in various recreation services provided through the RDCK Community Services Department.

It is recognized financial need falls on a spectrum where some individuals and families are able to participate in services with financial support subsidy whereas for others, the ability to pay any costs towards services not feasible. Further, the need for financial support may be long term or ongoing where for others it could be more emergent and short-term in nature.

This policy aims to provide opportunities for RDCK residents across the financial need spectrum with opportunities to access recreation services to some level by incorporating five components under one policy - Leisure Access Program, Support for Vulnerable Populations, Emergent Needs, No or Low Cost Programming, and Caregiver Supports.

This policy forms one part of the RDCK’s Community Services access and inclusion initiatives.

### **SCOPE:**

This Departmental policy will include access and inclusion initiatives specific to the area of recreation and parks programs, services and infrastructure and how to make those services more accessible and inclusive to the general public. This could include, but is not limited to, the areas of finance, communications, programming, infrastructure/environment, and administrative practices.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

**LAP means** Leisure Access Program

**Eligibility means** meeting the requirements for the financial need

**Adjudication means** the process of evaluating financial need

**Resident means** individuals or families that primary residents resides in the Regional District of Central Kootenay



**Pre-approved Social Service Organization** means a RDCK social service organization that has applied to the RDCK to be a 3<sup>rd</sup> party adjudicator and has been approved.

## **POLICY:**

### **Part 1: Leisure Access Program (LAP)**

The Leisure Access Program (LAP) helps residents of all ages living in the RDCK who are in financial hardship access RDCK recreation services. Individuals and families are welcome to apply. A family is defined as one or two adults, married or common law and their children (legal dependents) who live in the same household.

The LAP provides further subsidy on general admission, membership services, and most registered programs up to a maximum of \$100 for adults and \$150 for children per year to eligible participants. Should an additional credit subsidy be needed, participants would be able to make a second application within the same year through a third party adjudicator.

Once approved, LAP members would be able to use their available credit to support accessing recreation services based on the following discounts:

1. General Admissions – 50% (Adults) & 75% (Youth)
2. Memberships - 50% (Adults) & 75% (Youth)
3. Programs – 50% subsidy on advertised rates for programs.
4. Low cost or no cost programming – 100% discounted admission on targeted low cost or no cost programming.

For example, if the cost of adult general admission is \$7.00, an LAP member who is an adult would pay \$3.50 and \$3.50 would be deducted from their available credit. If the cost of youth general admission is \$4.00, and LAP member who is a youth would pay \$1.00 and \$3.00 would be deducted from their available credit.

### **Eligibility**

Residents of the Regional District of Central Kootenay may apply. The program is designed for individuals (19 years of age or older) and families. An applicant may qualify with:

1. Proof of primary residency within the RDCK via Driver's License, Utility billing, property tax notice, or rental agreement.

And one of the following:

1. Confirmation applicant is receiving government financial assistance through one of the following means:



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- Youth Agreement of Agreement with Youth Adults (AYA)
  - Confirmation letter from the Ministry of Children & Families
- Income Assistance or Disability Assistance
  - Confirmation letter from the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- Resettlement Assistance
  - Confirmation letter of Permanent Residence indicating status as a Government Assisted Refugee from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
- Rental Assistance Program or Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters
  - Confirmation letter from BC Housing
- Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)
  - Confirmation of current Status of Guaranteed Income Supplement from Service Canada. Required for both the main applicant and spouse (married or common law). If only one spouse receives GIS, the other must provide Proof of Income Statement.

Or,

2. For applicants who do not receive government assistance, a Notice of Assessment from the most recent tax year verifying financial hardship measured against the Low Income Measure (LIM) limits as established by Stats Canada for both the primary applicant and their spouse (married or common law).

Or,

3. A letter from a pre-approved social service organization within the RDCK validating the individual or family is in an emergent situation and that they endorse there is a need for financial support, as options 1 & 2 do not apply.

Once approved, the Leisure Access Pass will be valid for up to one year and will expire every May 31<sup>st</sup>. To continue the program, participants must reapply.

### Adjudication & Administration

Applicants will complete an application process that is available online and in hard copy through customer service staff at each of the major recreation facilities in Creston, Castlegar and Nelson as well as Salmo. Verification of financial need will be based on an honour system. Applicants will be asked to answer a series of questions whereby they validate they are in need and should qualify for this program. Applications will be evaluated by RDCK staff and processed within 10 business days. Should the available subsidy be exhausted, additional subsidy funds (up to a maximum of the original subsidy amounts) could be requested through a verification process from an approved third party adjudicator.

### Part 2: Support for Vulnerable Populations & Emergent Situations

The RDCK recognizes its unique role in the local community, and as such is committed to supporting vulnerable populations through our **Community Outreach Donation Program**. Organisations that



support vulnerable populations can include those agencies serving individuals or families on an ongoing basis.

### Services Available

Qualifying organizations are able to make one donation request per calendar year for up to a maximum of 100 courtesy passes to their local recreation complex. The passes would be dispersed at their discretion of the qualifying organization based on guidelines established by the RDCK for facility use. *Local complex* refers to the complex situated within the Recreation Commission service area of the organization making the request.

### Eligibility

Non-profit, government affiliated organizations with a mandate to serve vulnerable populations in the community qualify for this program. Organizations will be required to make an application to the RDCK and agree to terms and conditions before being issued passes.

### Emergency Situations

In emergency situations impacting the community as a whole (ie. Wildfire, flooding etc), direction on how to support individuals and families in these situations will come from the RDCK Emergency Response team.

### Part 3: No or Low Cost Programming

The RDCK Community Services Department will provide and/or promote other no or low cost programming opportunities for the community. This will be accomplished by looking for means to reduce fees on general admission services to provide additional opportunities for individuals/families facing financial challenges. To meet this objective, the following means will be utilized:

- Operating budgets to include free service delivery options with the goal of ensuring consistency of free service delivery opportunities across the region. Where possible, sponsorship to support these opportunities will be sought through an appropriate public process.
- Applying for grants to support creating free or low cost recreational opportunities.
- Offering of toonie swims and/or skates on a predetermined monthly schedule so as to target this opportunity across different demographics. These activities would be contingent on operational feasibility on a seasonal/annual basis.
- Highlight free and low cost recreational opportunities in RDCK promotional materials.

### Part 4: Caregivers & Support Workers

The RDCK understands some people require the direct support of a caregiver or support worker (“caregiver”) in order to enjoy participating in recreation services. A caregiver providing direct one to one support to an individual participating in RDCK services is not required to pay admission fees to facilities if they are attending directly to the needs of an individual. If more than one caregiver is required to attend to the needs of an individual, the second caregiver will pay regular admission rates unless a facility manager has provided alternate approvals. A caregiver can also be defined as a support worker, paid or unpaid person, who helps an individual with daily living functions. Within



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Community Services and the provision of recreation services, a caregiver does not include parents attending to the regular needs of their dependent children.

## Policy Review

On an annual basis, this policy and its associated parts will be reviewed based on:

- The public benefits being provided through the various program areas
- Whether the program is reaching its intended audience
- Feedback from users and organizations accessing the services this policy provides
- Ease of administration

Further, the Regional District Accessibility Advisory Committee (RAAC) will be requested to be part of the annual policy review process.

### **RELATED LEGISLATION:**

[Related legislation]

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