

Recreation Funding Access Discount Program Barriers

HALIFAX

Accessibility Advisory
Committee Aug 21, 2023

Parks & Recreation
Recreation Programming

2023-08-17

Origin

July 17th, 2021 Regional Council Motion (Item No:15.6.1)

MOVED by Councillor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Outhit

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to provide a staff report regarding reducing barriers to recreation for vulnerable communities including barriers to using Recreation Funding Access Program from the Affordable Access Program.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Recreation Funding Access Program

To be eligible to receive an Access Discount, an applicant must:

- (a) be a resident of the Municipality; and
- (b) demonstrate financial need

Program covers 50% or 100% of the total cost of memberships and programs at Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) run recreation centres. No limit to the number of programs approved applicants can register for. Discount is placed directly on HRM rec accounts and is applied at “checkout” when registering.

Number of people in household	Household income that qualifies for 100% discount	Household income that qualifies for 50% discount
1 person	24,000 and under	24,001-48,000
2 people	30,000 and under	30,001-60,000
3 people	37,000 and under	37,001-74,000
4 people	45,000 and under	45,001-90,000
5 people	50,000 and under	50,001-100,000
6 people	57,000 and under	57,001-114,000
7 people	63,000 and under	63,001-126,000

Recreation Funding Access Program

Currently Recreation Funding Access program requires:
A completed application form

AND

Notice of Assessment for current tax year for all Adults over 18

Canadian Child Tax Benefit Statement for all children under 18

- Includes household income and names of children

-OR-

Recreation Funding Access Program

Valid Welcomed In Halifax Card/ISANS letter

-OR-

Letter for referral from a community clinical working with the applicant/family:

- New Immigrants/Refugees/Asylum Seekers
- Clients referred from Nova Scotia Health Authority/ Department of Community Services/IWK/Local Schools/Schools Plus, Youth Specific Programs etc.
- Programs Targeted to Specific neighbourhood's/residences and/or individuals, along with specific partnership programs etc.
- Youth Advocate Program Clients

Background

Recreation Funding Access Program has been a part of combined Affordable Access Programs since 2019

Created partially in response to 2016 Statistics Canada Census: Nova Scotia had the highest level of child poverty in Canada

Background

Jurisdictional scan found that most recreation discounts in other municipalities in Canada either limit the number of programs that people can register for or have a monetary limit associated with the program

Background

In the 2022/2023 fiscal year, there were 1,312 applications processed for the Recreation Funding Access discount.

- Of those, 150 were rejected by the end of the year (11% of total applications received)
 - Most were missing some paperwork or had the wrong paperwork (76%)
 - Some had the correct paperwork but were missing an account in our system (21%)
 - Only 0.06% of people that applied did not meet the financial requirements
 - 14% of the 150 people that were rejected submitted the correct paperwork in the next fiscal year and were approved

Background

- In the 2022/2023 fiscal year, 3,314 registered clients had a discount places on the HRM rec account.
 - Only 1,154 clients registered for programs using their discounts
 - More than half (55%) of these registration happened in July and August, which is the same time as our summer camp programming.
 - 93% of the registrations were connected to youth clients (18 and under).

Barriers identified

Application process

- No knowledge of the program
- Application form too complex
- Application form only in English
- No access to financial paperwork
 - Did not file taxes
 - Filed taxes late and don't have their most recent Notice of Assessment
 - No easy access to their Notice of Assessment or Canadian Child Benefit Explanation
 - Have not yet filed taxes in Canada

Barriers

Registration process

- Not understanding the registration process
 - Registration happens at a specific date/time
- Program fill quickly
- Issues with free programming
 - No shows to programs
 - Registering for multiple programs in the same time frame

No shows to programs

- Participants with a 100% recreation access discount are more likely to miss multiple full weeks of summer camp programming than participants with a 50% discount or no discount
- They are also more likely to register for multiple programs for one participant in the same week

No shows to programs

- In four weeks of summer camp programming at Bedford Hammonds Plains Community Centre, 41% of the participants used an Access Discount (100% or 50%) to enroll in the day camp programs
- Of the participants that enrolled using their Access discount, 83% missed 3 or more days on summer camp programming in July
 - 22% missed the entire week of programming in July
- In contrast, 0.01% of participants that paid out of pocket missed 3 day of camp program and none missed an entire week

Potential questions:

1. Any other barriers that we might have missed (application process or registration?)
2. Any suggestions in terms of handling people that are not showing up to programs?
3. Any other ways we can get the information out to the community about this program?

Next Steps

- Incorporate feedback from Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Deliver completed report to Regional Council in October