



## **Fact Sheet: Social Relief of Distress**

The Department of Social Development is asking you to come forward to claim temporary assistance from government in the form of Social Relief of Distress (SRD) in order to alleviate your poverty and suffering.

### **What is Social Relief of Distress?**

Social Relief of Distress is the rendering of temporary and immediate material assistance to people in need who have no other means of support. It is normally issued as a food parcel but can also be issued as a voucher or cash payment. Social Relief of Distress is usually issued for a period of up to 3 months but can be extended for a further 3 months in exceptional cases.

You cannot apply if you are already receiving food assistance from another organization. You are also not entitled to receive Social Relief of Distress and a grant at the same time, so any overpayment can be recovered from the grant due and payable.

### **You are eligible for Social Relief of Distress if ...**

1. You are waiting for permanent aid such as a grant, UIF, provident fund money, RAF or COIDA etc.
2. You are medically unfit to work for less than six months.
3. You are supposed to be getting maintenance payments, and you can't find the person who is supposed to pay.
4. The person in your family who earns the money (the breadwinner) has just died, gone to prison, treatment centre or hospital.
5. You have been affected by a disaster (for example, fire, tornado, or flood) and the area in which you live has not yet been declared a disaster area.
6. You made application for a grant using an ID or other form of identification and are waiting for the grant to be approved and paid.
7. You have appealed against the suspension of your grant.
8. If you do not qualify in terms of the above criteria but the refusal of Social Relief of Distress would, in the opinion of the Director General, cause undue hardship (Reg 26[3]) assistance may still be given in exceptional circumstances.

**Examples of undue hardship that may qualify include:**

- An elderly person who is 50 years and older who cannot qualify for an old age pension but also cannot obtain work to support him or herself and his or her dependent children.
- A person evicted from a farm, rural area or rented accommodation and is unable to secure employment immediately in his or her new area of residence.
- A single parent who has to care for one or more child(ren) and is unable to take up employment because of the caring responsibilities and therefore cannot provide a nutritious meal for him or herself or his or her dependents.
- Children who live alone and have no access to a nutritious meal a day.
- Families where there are symptoms of malnutrition and stunted growth in children.
- Individuals who are homeless and have no access to a nutritious meal. Being homeless can be a consequence of a number of circumstances such as:
  - Discharge from institutions such as psychiatric hospitals, prisons, general hospitals etc without continued support.
  - Displacement from families and farms and rural settlements.
  - People who apply for ID documents and have proof of application.

**You are able to claim money for transport if ...**

- You have to travel far for medical treatment and there is no other transport available (you will need a letter from the doctor treating you to confirm that this is necessary).
- You need to travel far to start employment (you will need a letter from the company/employer confirming the date you are due to start working).

**What do you need in order to apply?**

1. Proof of lack of means, such as a letter from a religious leader, councillor, social worker or an affidavit made by you as the applicant.
2. An identity document or birth certificate or any other valid identification document that proves your identity as the applicant and that of any dependents for whom you are applying.

3. Proof of temporary medical disability. Proof can come from private and state doctors. (This proof is not applicable for a Disability Grant assessment)
4. Proof that your spouse is either in prison, a treatment centre or hospital.
5. Proof of your marital status, if you are married.
6. If you have appealed against a decision to suspend your grant, bring a copy showing that you have appealed.
7. If you have applied for a grant, bring a receipt to show that you have applied.
8. The official might also request alternative proof to that listed above including:
  - Proof of application for identity documents
  - Affidavit
  - Death certificates
  - Municipal Bills
  - Banking account
  - Letter from an organization or a public person

The application form must be completed in the presence of an official.  
The application must be made at the time the distress is being experienced.  
The form must be certified by the official.

**Contact the Black Sash regional office in your province for more information and free paralegal advice and assistance.**

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