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## Affordable Access Policy

### Purpose

To ensure that all residents have the opportunity to access programs and services offered by the Community Services department.

This policy and procedure provide information on accessing programs and services through the Middlesex Centre Recreation Assistance Program (hereinafter referred to as Recreation Assistance Program or program).

The Recreation Assistance Program extends the benefits of municipal recreation and culture programs to an increased number of individuals who live in low-income conditions and are therefore less likely to afford current user fees.

### Policy Statement

Aligned with the corporate values of respect, cooperation, innovation and integrity, the Municipality of Middlesex Centre works to ensure that every resident can participate in our community and engage with our municipal government regardless of financial circumstances.

Under the Recreation Assistance Program, financial assistance is available based on the total net income of all family members and the number of people in your household.

### Scope

Individuals requesting affordable recreation must reside in Middlesex Centre and meet the criteria indicated in this policy. Individuals who reside outside of Middlesex Centre are not eligible to apply.

The Recreation Assistance Program is available to Middlesex Centre residents based on the economic need of individuals and families. Verification of income is required in order to confirm eligibility into the program. The process for gathering and recording income level and net individual/family income information outlined in this procedure complies with applicable legislation, including the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*.

## **Procedure**

Process for accessing programs and services through the Middlesex Centre Recreation Assistance Program.

### ***Enrollment***

Enrolment in the Recreation Assistance Program will be aligned to the current annual budget allocation. Participants will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Each approved, eligible program participant will be enrolled for a period of 12 months and receive a subsidy of up to \$300, in the form of an account credit, that can be applied to their client account for use towards Middlesex Centre's Recreation and Culture programs.

Registrations into the Recreation Assistance Program will be ongoing throughout the year. The first day of each customer's twelve-month enrolment period will be the date their credit is added to their account.

### ***Reapplying***

Recreation Assistance Program participants are responsible to reapply annually and must continue to meet all eligibility criteria. Applications may be made thirty days prior to the end of their current enrolment period to minimize delay in accessing programs and services.

### ***Unused credits***

Any unused account credits remaining at the end of the customer's enrolment period cannot be carried over to the following year, transferred to another individual or family member, or redeemed for cash.

Credits can be applied to any active recreation or culture registration program, even if the start date is past the individual's year-end date. For example, if the customer's activation date was January 1, 2022 (with an expiry date of December 31, 2022), the customer may enroll in August 2022 for a program that starts in February 2023. For membership products, future-dated memberships will be allowed if it extends an existing membership.

### ***Qualifications***

To qualify for the Recreation Assistance Program the applicant must be:

- a resident of Middlesex Centre;
- total net individual or combined family income below LICO (Low Income Cut-Off);
- provide recent official documentation that shows total family net income, and proof that all dependents are the legal responsibility of the adult and reside in the adult's household, using one or more of the following original statements/documents:
  - Notice of Assessment form (NOA)

- Canada Child Tax Benefit Notice;
- Dependants under the age of 18 cannot apply as individuals. A parent or legal guardian must complete an application on their behalf.
- Full-time post-secondary students are not eligible for Recreation Assistance Program as universities and colleges provide recreational programs and fee assistance programs for their students.
- Refugees and qualifying newcomers to Canada, residing in Middlesex Centre, are eligible to apply to Recreation Assistance Program within the first year of receiving documentation indicating immigration status:
  - Confirmation of Permanent Residency (issued within one year)
  - Refugee Protection Claimant Documentation (issued within one year)
  - A document issued under a special program of the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRC) such as a visa issued under Canada-Ukraine
  - Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) (issued within one year)
  - Immigration documentation is required for each member of the family. Applicants will be required to confirm residency by providing a bank statement or lease/rental agreement or a letter from a host family as applicable.

### ***Application process***

Applications for the Recreation Assistance Program may be made at the Komoka Wellness Centre. A specific appointment time is not necessary, however, may be arranged in advance by emailing [recreation@middlesexcentre.ca](mailto:recreation@middlesexcentre.ca). Applicants are required to present the following documentation:

- Completed Fee Assistance application form, available online, at the Komoka Wellness Centre, or by mail;
- Proof of residency in Middlesex Centre (recent utility bill, lease agreement, driver's license);
- proof of total family net income or qualifying newcomers' documentation
- and legal responsibility for all dependents listed on the application.

### **Role of authorized Community Services staff**

Two staff members (minimum of one full-time) will be responsible for completing the following.

- Review customer's documents, ensuring confidentiality;

- record on the application form the type of identification and documentation provided, including date and location received;
- initial the form and ensure it is initialed by the full-time staff member present;
- forward the completed and verified application form to the Community Services Department;
- advise applicants that they will receive confirmation within approximately seven (7) business days.

Staff authorized to process Recreation Assistance Program applications will confirm that all areas of the application are complete, and that the application form has been verified. Applicants who have been declined will be advised of the reason(s) and, if applicable, any steps they can take to make a successful application. A user account will be set up for successful applicants, if none exists, and the credit subsidy will be applied. Staff will provide (by mail/email) information and instruction to applicants on how to register for the programs of their choice and advise them that credit will be drawn from the account as payment. All applications, both approved and declined, will be filed in a secure, confidential location at the Komoka Wellness Centre.

### **Use of credit**

Once the subsidy credit has been applied to their account, Recreation Assistance Program customers may register in available programs. All conditions related to recreation and culture programs, including transfers, membership changes, withdrawals and missed classes apply.

### **Ineligible programs**

Programs and services that are ineligible for fee assistance due to higher program delivery costs or service model include, but not limited to:

- Concession items
- Facility rentals

The Director of Community Services, after careful consideration of the circumstances and in consultation with Community Services staff, may make exceptions on a case-by-case basis to accommodate individual requests.

### **Definitions**

Family: the applicant, his/her spouse or common-law partner and all legal dependants.

Family Net Income: as defined by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), means the total of the applicant's net income and his/her spouse's or common law partner's net income.

Low Income Cut-Off (LICO): a measure of poverty calculated by Statistics Canada using an annual survey of incomes, and defines a set of after tax (net) income levels below which

individuals are considered to be living under the poverty line. Cut-off levels vary with the number of family members and are adjusted periodically for inflation.

### **Responsibilities**

This procedure is to be followed by Community Services Staff under the supervision of the Director of Community Services. The policy will be reviewed every 4 years (once per council term)