

Policy Title: ActiveAssist - Fee Assistance Program

Policy Number: 08-03-06

Section:	Community Services	Subsection:	Recreation
Effective Date:	December 11, 2020	Last Review Date:	December, 2020
Approved by: Council		Owner Division/Contact: Recreation Division, Community Services Department	

Policy Statement

ActiveAssist, the City of Mississauga’s fee assistance program, will enable many residents living in low-income households to register and participate in quality cultural, library and recreational activities by offering user fee credit subsidies.

Purpose

User fee subsidies will extend the benefits of municipal Culture, Library and Recreation programs to an increased number of children, youth, families and older adults who live in low-income conditions and are therefore less likely to afford current user fees.

Scope

ActiveAssist is based on the economic need of individuals and families. Participation in the program is capped at 14,500 low-income individuals who are residents of Mississauga.

Post-secondary students who are enrolled full time in a college or university are not eligible, as these institutions provide affordable community service options. An exception is made for full-time post-secondary students with dependants.

Mississauga residents who participate in another City-administered fee assistance program are not eligible to apply for ActiveAssist during that calendar year.

Legislative Authority

Verification of income is required in order to confirm eligibility to ActiveAssist. The procedures for gathering and recording income level and net individual/family income information outlined in this policy comply with all applicable legislation, including the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA). For additional information on MFIPPA refer to Corporate Policy and Procedure, Records Management, Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy. The City of Mississauga, as authorized by the *Municipal Act, 2001*, establishes an annual by-law to impose, waive, reduce or otherwise vary a recreation program fee or charge.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

“Family” means 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 their spouse’s or common law partner’s net income.

“Low Income Cut-Off (LICO)” means 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.

“Membership” means all recreational memberships/passes, such as, but not limited to, fitness, swimming and skating. Memberships are for the exclusive use of the member, are limited to a fixed term and have a specific expiry date. Personal training and multi-visits are excluded.

Administration

ActiveAssist is administered by the Community Services Department, Recreation Division, via the Customer Service Centre (“CSC”). All ActiveAssist credit subsidies will be tracked using a registration software system. Recreation staff will undertake compliance auditing and produce ongoing reports to ensure strict management of the program. Significant changes cannot be made to the program cap or eligibility requirements without Council approval.

Overview of Program

ActiveAssist is a municipally supported financial assistance program available to those with incomes below LICO levels. The most recent LICO rates available at the time of registration will be used to determine eligibility. The Manager, Sport Development & CSC or their designate will be responsible to monitor Statistics Canada LICO adjustments and communicate them to staff, including clear effective dates.

Community Services staff will collaborate with community agencies and stakeholders, who will promote ActiveAssist to residents who have been identified as low-income. Information will also be available to residents of Mississauga in a variety of Community Service marketing material.

Enrolment

Participants in the program will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Each eligible ActiveAssist participant will be enrolled for a period of one year and receive an annual subsidy of \$275, in the form of an account credit, that can be applied to Mississauga Culture, Library and Recreation registered paid programs and/or non-transferable Memberships. ActiveAssist participants have the option to either use their credit subsidy to cover the full program cost or to pay a portion themselves, using an accepted payment method.

ActiveAssist credits cannot be transferred to another person. All conditions related to programs, including: transfers, Membership changes, withdrawals and missed classes as outlined in Corporate Policy and Procedure - Fees and Other Revenues - Administration of Program and Membership Fees, will apply to ActiveAssist registrants, with the exception of administration fees.

Registrations will be ongoing throughout the year. The first day of each customer's twelve month enrolment period will be the date their subsidy is activated.

ActiveAssist participants are responsible to apply annually and must continue to meet all eligibility criteria. Applications for the next year may be made thirty calendar days prior to the end of their current enrolment period.

If the maximum number of ActiveAssist customers has been reached, applicant(s) will be put on a waitlist, as outlined in the ActiveAssist Waitlist section of this policy.

Unused Credit

The following applies to unused credits:

- Any full account credits that have not been accessed six months after the customer's enrolment date are automatically removed by the registration software system
- Any partial account credits remaining twelve months after the customer's enrolment date are automatically removed by the registration software system, and
- Credits cannot be carried over to the following year, transferred to another individual or family member or redeemed for cash. If the remaining credit is not sufficient to cover the full cost of a program the participant may opt to pay the balance using any accepted means of payment

Credits can be applied to any active registration program, even if the start date is past the individual's year end date. For example, the customer's activation date is July 15, 2020, with an expiry date of July 14, 2021. The customer may choose to enrol in April, 2021 for a program that starts in August, 2021.

Credits can be used to purchase a Recreation Membership, providing the start date is before the ActiveAssist expiry date, or to extend an existing Recreation Membership.

In the event that an Active Assist participant has registered in a program that is cancelled by the City after the participant's ActiveAssist enrolment period has expired, the customer may be transferred to another program in the same session by the CSC.

Criteria

This program is available to Mississauga residents applying as:

- a.) An individual or family without dependants under the age of 18:

- Documentation to show net individual/combined family income below the Low Income Cut Off amounts (LICO Statistics Canada) must be provided
 - Supporting documentation should reflect the net income for both individuals; show a combined net income; or prequalify with programs such as Ontario Works or the Ontario Drug/Dental/Disability Support Program. One or more of the following documents must be included:
 1. Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) Notice of Assessment(s) T451*
 2. Ontario Works monthly statement**
 3. Ontario Disability Support Program monthly statement**
 4. Goods & Services/Harmonized Sales Tax Credit Notice***
 - * separate documents must be included for each person listed on the application
 - **all persons listed on the application must be listed on the supporting documentation
 - ***can only be used for those applying as an individual or family with dependants
- b.) A family with dependants under the age of 18:
- Documentation to show combined net family income below the Low Income Cut Off amounts (LICO Statistics Canada) and indicating dependants (i.e. Canada Child Benefits forms) must be provided
 - Supporting documentation should reflect the combined net income for the family, applicant's marital status and all dependants, or; prequalify with programs such as Ontario Works or the Ontario Drug/Dental/Disability Support Program. One or more of the following documents must be included*:
 1. Canada Child Benefit Notice
 2. Goods & Services/Harmonized Sales Tax Credit Notice***
 3. Ontario Drug/Dental Benefit Eligibility Card with valid Healthy Smiles Card for each dependant
 4. Ontario Disability Support Program monthly statement with Drug Benefit Eligibility Card**
 - *separate documents must be included for each person listed on the application
 - **all persons listed on the application must be listed on the supporting documentation
 - ***can only be used for those applying as an individual or family with dependants
- c.) A newcomer with refugee status:
- Requires documentation with refugee status using either Confirmation of Permanent Residency (issued within one year) or Refugee Protection Claimant Document
 - Refugees and qualifying newcomers to Canada are eligible to apply for ActiveAssist within the first year of receiving the following documents indicating immigration status. Immigration documentation is required for each member of the family in addition to proof of residency; income is not a requirement.

1. Confirmation of Permanent Residency Form indicating refugee status, issue date within 1 year*, or
 2. Refugee Protection Claimant Document, issue date within 1 year*, and
 3. Bank statement or lease/rental agreement to confirm Mississauga residency
- *separate documents must be presented for each person listed on the application

Dependants under the age of 18 cannot apply as individuals. A parent or legal guardian must complete an application on their behalf.

Exceptions

The following exceptions may apply:

- Emancipated youth under the age of 18 may apply as individuals
- Children and youth (under the age of 18) with disabilities who do not meet the ActiveAssist program criteria may be approved if it is determined by the City that a qualified support worker is required in order to participate in the requested City program(s). Requests for this exception coming through the CSC will be directed to the applicable designate in the appropriate division within the Community Services Department for consideration.
- Children in the care of Peel Children's Aid: the City authorizes designated Peel Children's Aid staff to complete ActiveAssist applications and verify documents for children under their guardianship. Peel Children's Aid staff will scan and forward the application and supporting documentation electronically to the CSC for consideration.
- The applicable Divisional Director (or their designate), after careful consideration of the circumstances and in consultation with applicable staff, may make additional exceptions to the ActiveAssist criteria on a case by case basis to accommodate individual requests.

Excluded Programs

Programs and services that are ineligible for ActiveAssist due to higher program delivery costs or inability to register via the central registration system include:

- Box office tickets at Living Arts Centre (LAC), Meadowvale Theatre or Paramount Fine Foods Centre
- Glass and woodworking registration and fees (Culture Programs)
- Green Fees and golf programs at BraeBen Golf Course and Lakeview Golf Course
- Marina slip reservations (Port Credit Village Marina and Lakefront Promenade)
- Museums admissions
- Older Adult bus trips
- Park and outdoor field permits
- Private or semi-private swimming and skating lessons; other private or semi-private lessons/instruction (e.g. squash); low ratio instructor to participant programs (i.e. 1 to 4 or less); and personal training (e.g. Fitness and aquatic therapy)
- Room or facility rentals, including Banquets
- LAC Resident Artist Program

- Single admission (pay as you go) or multi-visits passes
- Team and Player Fees for City-operated Mississauga Sport Leagues (MSL)
- Additional fees that are payable on top of registration fees (e.g. National Lifesaving Society instructional book, costume/recital fees and course material)

Application Process

Applications for ActiveAssist may be submitted in accordance with the Recreation ActiveAssist – Fee Assistance Program Verification of Documents. Staff will ensure confidentiality and the safekeeping of personal information in accordance with MFIPPA requirements.

Applicants are required to provide copies of the following documentation:

- The completed ActiveAssist form and,
- Proof of residency in Mississauga (e.g. recent utility bill, lease agreement, driver's license), and,
- Proof of total family net income and legal responsibility for all dependants listed on the application, as outlined in the Criteria or Exception sections of this policy

Applications are also available in alternative formats upon request.

ActiveAssist Waitlist

Maximum enrolment in ActiveAssist is capped at 14,500. The CSC will monitor the number of registered ActiveAssist participants and maintain supplementary waitlist tracking.

When maximum enrolment is reached, ActiveAssist applicants that meet all eligibility requirements will be advised that they have been put on a waitlist. When space becomes available the CSC will contact the customer at the top of the waitlist and advise them that they may now enrol in a program/Membership.

CSC staff are responsible for actively monitoring the number of registered ActiveAssist participants. Spaces made available by the removal of full customer account credits will be reallocated to those on the waitlist.

Jerry Love Children's Fund

The Jerry Love Children's Fund (the Fund) is a volunteer donations fund established to provide financial assistance to eligible children participating in City recreation activities. Recreation staff administer the Fund, which City staff and corporate sponsors contribute to through a variety of fundraising activities. Many of the children who qualify may not meet the financial criteria for ActiveAssist, so will continue to be accommodated by the Fund. If applicants have accessed funding via the Jerry Love Children's Fund within one calendar year preceding their application to ActiveAssist, they are ineligible to receive ActiveAssist funding, but may reapply the following year.

Monitoring and Reporting

In order to ensure proper management and oversight of the program, standardized quarterly reports available for audit will be provided by the Manager, Sport Development & Customer Service Centre to all Divisional Directors with participants in the program itemizing:

- The number of ActiveAssist customers
- The total unrealized revenue of ActiveAssist credit spending on registrations and Memberships
- Ratio of paying customers to ActiveAssist customers, and
- A standardized quarterly report of all ActiveAssist program registrations where a direct cost to the City is incurred (including third-party delivered programming partnerships)

Revision History

Reference	Description
GC-0194-2009 - 2009 04 08	
GC-0385-2010 - 2010 05 26	Increased maximum participation to 4,000 residents.
June 02, 2010	Administrative revision related to Administration of Recreation Fees policy – FAP customers not charged admin fee
GC-0455-2011- 2011 07 06	Increased maximum to 8,000
January 25, 2012	Added aquatic therapy in excluded programs Leadership Team - 2013 10 24 – Scheduled review. Admin changes to reflect current practices and add Kids in Care Provision
GC-0190-2014 - 2014 05 14	Maximum number of ActiveAssist clients increased to 10,000
GC-0091-2015 - 2015 02 25	Maximum number of ActiveAssist clients increased to 12,500
April 21, 2015	Removed need for original documents – CRA moving to online processing only
November 5, 2015	Revised to remove reference to the ActiveAssist cost centre and JV. Replaced with a quarterly report that includes third-party providers

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GC-0050-2017 – 2017 02 22 - (effective 2017 05 01)	Major review – changes to application process, program capacity (increased to 14,500) and unused credit expiration timelines
July 3, 2018	Housekeeping - removed “Hershey” from Sports Zone due to rebranding, effective July 01, 2018
December 14, 2020	Scheduled review. Revised to include Library programs and reflect current practices.