



Senior BENEFITS PROGRAM

Information & Fact Sheet
Updated April 2020

Overview

The Alaska Senior Benefits Program pays monthly cash benefits to Alaskans who are age 65 or older and have low to moderate income. Payment levels depend on available state funding and how many people apply and qualify for the program. If the state budget cannot support the original amounts of \$125, \$175 and \$250, regulations allow for changes to be made for all eligible program participants. Cuts come from the highest income tier first, then the second, then the third.

The monthly payment for the highest income level was reduced to \$47 from \$125 on March 1, 2016 due to the state's limited budget for state fiscal year 2016. The budget for state fiscal year 2017 allowed full monthly payments of \$175 and \$250 to recipients with the lowest income. Those income payment levels continued through the end of that fiscal year. Funding reductions in this program must be applied to individuals in the highest income bracket first. They received \$47 for July because the budget was not finalized in time to make changes for July benefits. Beginning August 1, 2016, individuals in that highest income bracket received \$76 per month based on available funding at that income bracket. These income payment levels continued for state fiscal years 2018 - 2020.

Eligibility and Payment:

- Eligibility and payment amount is based on gross annual income (before any deductions are taken for taxes, Medicare premiums, etc.)
- Assets, such as savings, are not counted
- Income limits may change yearly along with Alaska's federal poverty level. The \$250, \$175, and \$76 monthly payments correspond to 75 percent, 100 percent, and 175 percent of the federal poverty level for Alaska, respectively
- Payments are not available to seniors living in the following institutions:
 - ✓ Prison or jail
 - ✓ Alaska Pioneers' Home or Alaska Veterans' Home
 - ✓ A nursing home
 - ✓ Public or private institution for mental disease

Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit Effective 4/1/2020

The income limit changed April 1, 2020 due to a change in the Federal Poverty Limit.

Senior Household Size	\$250 monthly payment	\$175 monthly payment	\$76 monthly payment
Individual	\$11,963 (\$997 per month)	\$15,950 (\$1,330 per month)	\$27,913 (\$2,327 per month)
Married Couple	\$16,163 (\$1,347 per month)	\$21,550 (\$1,796 per month)	\$37,713 (\$3,143 per month)

**Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit
Effective 4/1/2019**

The income limit changed April 1, 2019 due to a change in the Federal Poverty Limit.

Senior Household Size	\$250 monthly payment	\$175 monthly payment	\$76 monthly payment
Individual	\$11,700 (\$975 per month)	\$15,600 (\$1,300 per month)	\$27,300 (\$2,275 per month)
Married Couple	\$15,848 (\$1,321 per month)	\$21,130 (\$1,761 per month)	\$36,978 (\$3,082 per month)

**Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit
Effective 4/1/2018 – 3/31/2019**

The income limit changed April 1, 2018 due to a change in the Federal Poverty Limit.

Senior Household Size	\$250 monthly payment	\$175 monthly payment	\$76 monthly payment
Individual	\$11,385 (\$949 per month)	\$15,180 (\$1,265 per month)	\$26,565 (\$2,214 per month)
Married Couple	\$15,435 (\$1,287 per month)	\$20,580 (\$1,715 per month)	\$36,015 (\$3,002 per month)

**Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit
Effective 4/1/2017 – 3/31/2018**

The income limit changed April 1, 2017 due to a change in the Federal Poverty Limit.

Senior Household Size	\$250 monthly payment	\$175 monthly payment	\$76 monthly payment
Individual	\$11,295 (\$942 per month)	\$15,060 (\$1,255 per month)	\$26,355 (\$2,197 per month)
Married Couple	\$15,218 (\$1,269 per month)	\$20,290 (\$1,691 per month)	\$35,508 (\$2,959 per month)

Senior Benefits recipients as of December 2019:

- 10,784 recipients. Number and percent of seniors at each payment level:
 ✓ \$250 – 1,741 (16.1%) ✓ \$175 – 5,101 (47.3%) ✓ \$76 – 3,942 (36.6%)
- As of December 2019, the average age of recipients is 74 and the maximum age is 105
- The number of Senior Benefits cases have been increasing each year until 2016. All figures are for December:
 ✓ 2019 – 10,784 ✓ 2017 – 11,322 ✓ 2015 – 11,746
 ✓ 2018 – 11,599 ✓ 2016 – 11,632 ✓ 2014 – 11,222

Recipients statewide as of December 2019:

Census Area	Number of Recipients	Census Area	Number of Recipients
Aleutians East	19	Lake and Peninsula	28
Aleutians West	21	Mat-Su	1,497
Anchorage	4,121	Nome	208
Bethel	481	North Slope	26
Bristol Bay	9	NW Arctic	1113
Denali	11	Petersburg	66
Dillingham	81	Prince of Wales	176
Fairbanks N Star	900	SE Fairbanks	175
Haines	83	Sitka	96
Hoonah-Angoon	65	Skagway	7
Juneau	333	Valdez / Cordova	158
Kenai	1,147	Wrangell	68
Ketchikan Gateway	270	Yakutat	12
Kodiak	197	Yukon / Koyukuk	216
Kusilvak	200	GRAND TOTAL	10,784

History of the Senior Benefits Program:

1972 - 2003	Alaska Longevity Bonus Program. Established in 1972. Alaska residents became eligible at age 65. \$250/month was issued to seniors who applied before 1994, \$200 to those applying in 1994, \$150 to those applying in 1995, and \$100 to those applying in 1996. Payments were not available to seniors who applied after 1996. The program was subsequently defunded in 2003, and final benefits were issued for the month of August 2003.
2003 - 2004	Senior Assistance Program. Beginning September 2003, the Governor's office used its executive authority to establish the needs-based Senior Assistance program in response to the needs of low-income Alaskans aged 65 and older who were financially impacted by the elimination of the Alaska Longevity Bonus. Payments were limited to \$120/month. The program ended March 2004.
2004 - 2007	SeniorCare Program. Beginning April 2004, the SeniorCare Program was established to replace the former Senior Assistance Program. The new program was expanded to include a prescription drug benefit. Low-income seniors that passed the program's income and resource limits could choose to receive either a \$120/month payment or a prescription drug benefit. The program ended July 2007.
2007 - Present	Senior Benefits Program. Established to replace the SeniorCare Program. Began August 2007; up for reauthorization in June 2018. Provides three payment levels based on the senior's gross annual income. Income limits are tied to the Federal Poverty Guidelines for Alaska and change each year as the poverty level changes. There is no asset test. Regulation change finalized January 2016 described how benefits would be reduced by appropriation shortfall. Due to caseload increase, the highest income level that normally receives a \$125 benefit had the benefit reduced to \$47 effective March 1, 2016. The budgets for state fiscal years 2018 – 2020 allowed for a monthly payment of \$76 to recipients in the highest income level.