



# READY SET KNOW

SOCIAL SERVICES  
NAVIGATION GUIDE

FOR LGBTQI+ PEOPLE  
IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO



NATIONAL GRANTS





## WHAT'S INSIDE

This guide is here to help. We know that accessing social services is not simple, and so we have included some information and tips that should help along the way.

### **The guide includes information on:**

- Types of grants and what they are
- Who can apply for grants and other services
- What you need when applying
- Helpful tips for getting it all done



Look for this image to get quick tips and tools

We are sharing this guide as a series leading up to a final version with a directory.

## WHY A SOCIAL SERVICES NAVIGATION GUIDE ?

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services provides a range of support services to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago that may alleviate some socio-economic problems.

However, navigating the system can take a long time and is very challenging for LGBTQI+ people for many reasons. For example, gender non-conforming and trans people are likely to experience discrimination based on their gender identity and expression not aligning with their identity documents.

Knowledge on how to qualify for or gain access to grants and services is not readily available. Furthermore, challenges may be faced at national buildings because of issues related to dress codes and transportation cost. There may also be challenges accessing reliable internet service and navigating websites.

This document will contextualise the legal protections available in Trinidad and Tobago and cover concerns that frequently arise for LGBTQI+ people.

Currently there is no one resource guide that comprehensively meets the needs of LGBTQI+ people living in Trinidad and Tobago who are eligible for social services.

# ABOUT WHOLENESS & JUSTICE

**CAISO: Sex and Gender Justice** established the **Wholeness & Justice (WJ) programme** in 2020 to expand access for LGBTQI+ people living in Trinidad & Tobago to wholeness, justice, and social services. Specifically, WJ provides clinical, legal, and wholeness development services for members of the LGBTQI+ community who experience violations. *For more info on the programme, visit [caisott.org](http://caisott.org).*

## **LEGAL SUPPORT**

For clients who experience violations, acts of discrimination, or abuse.

## **CLINICAL (PSYCHO-SOCIAL) SUPPORT**

For clients who may require mental support while accessing services, or need assistance with managing day-to-day challenges.

## **WHOLENESS DEVELOPMENT**

For clients who may benefit from a wide array of development support. These services range from guidance and support with managing day-to-day life challenges, connecting with service providers and different agencies, and addressing issues like food insecurity. WJ also offers capacity building support for services providers.

WJ provides important support for community members and understands that more resources are always needed. This guide seeks to help people find additional sources of assistance by highlighting grants and services provided by the Government through the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services.

## A NOTE TO YOU

Social services are a right. You deserve a roof over your head, food to eat and the ability to provide for yourself or your family. When we work (even if you are not working now), buy food, or pay any form of tax, we give money to the government. The government's job is to listen to and take care of its people.

Applying for grants can be hard. Some of the questions can feel too personal and there are often many forms to be filled out. We want to remind you it is okay to feel frustrated in this process. It takes a lot of strength to ask for help when things are difficult. We hope this guide can make things a little easier.



Social services are paid for by the people. You are deserving.

# GENERAL INFORMATION ON GRANTS

## Important documents:

It is helpful to have these documents for most of the grant applications

- Bank passbook/statement
- Birth certificate
- National ID Card
- Passport (if applicable)
- Marriage certificate (if applicable)

We have attached many of the forms you need here. However some forms/applications are only accessible in office.

There may be forms that are not on the checklist that you may be asked for depending on the specifics of your case. These include forms issued by the Social Welfare Office: in respect of student enrolment, receipt of National Insurance benefits and/or medical information.

Lastly it is important to note that the Ministry often checks information on your application with other government agencies. So it is important that the information at these different agencies match.

# PUBLIC ASSISTANCE GRANTS

Public Assistance grants are meant to help in times of need and hardship. This grant is available for a number of situations described below. These include situations where you are temporarily disabled and unable to earn a living, applying on behalf of a child whose parent is hospitalized or imprisoned and more. This part of the guide will help you decide if you're in situation where you can apply for a public assistance grant. It also tells you what you will need to apply.

- You need a bank passbook/statement to receive these funds

Monthly Public Assistance Grant payments
\$1,300.00 for one (1) person in the same household
\$1,550.00 for two (2) persons in the same household
\$1,750.00 for three (3) persons in the same household
\$1,900.00 for four (4) or more persons in the same household

 Household- one or more persons living together (sleeping most nights of the week) and sharing at least one of the main daily meals.



## CAN I APPLY?

### Who can apply?

- ★ A person who is **18 or older** and certified by a Medical Officer as unable to earn a living due to **physical or mental disability**

### What do I need?

- Your National ID Card
  - A form certified by a medical officer saying you cannot earn a living because of your disability
- 

### Who can apply?

- ★ A person receiving **Senior Citizens' Pension**, whose
  - a) spouse is **55 years and over** and **unemployed**
  - b) spouse is **under 55 years** but unable to work due to **physical or mental disability**

### What do I need?

- Your National ID Card
- Your Spouse's ID Card
- Your Marriage Certificate
- Proof of Senior Citizens' Pension
  - a) Proof spouse in unemployed
  - b) A form certified by a medical officer saying spouse cannot work because of disability



**Who can apply?**

- ★ A person whose *deceased spouse* received **both Senior Citizens' Pension and Public Assistance**

**What do I need?**

- Marriage Certificate
  - Death Certificate
  - Proof of pension
  - Proof of public assistance
- 

**Who can apply?**

- ★ A single parent who is unable to earn a living due to caring for a *child* with a **physical or mental disability**

**What do I need?**

- Proof of abandonment by other parent; attempt to file for maintenance for child  
Death Certificate  
Birth Certificate with only one parent listed  
An affidavit that says that you are the only parent of the child
- Birth Certificate of child with you named as parent
- Your National ID Card
- A form certified by a medical officer saying child has physical or mental disability



See the form for medical officers at the back of this guide



## **APPLYING**

### **Who can apply?**

- ★ A **parent, guardian or custodian** on behalf of a *child* with a **physical or mental disability**

### **What do I need?**

- Birth Certificate
  - Order or letter of guardianship
  - Custody order/letter
  - Your National ID Card
- 

### **Who can apply?**

- ★ an adult for a *child* whose parent is
  - a) hospitalized
  - b) deceased
  - c) imprisoned
  - d) or has abandoned the family and does not provide support despite there being an application/order for maintenance

### **What do I need?**

- Birth Certificate
- Your National ID Card
- ID card of parent
- Proof that the child is in your care
  - a) Proof of hospitalization/ medical records
- b) Death Certificate
  - c) Court extract/record of imprisonment
  - d) Court record of application/order for maintenance from a parent who does not provide



## APPLYING

### Who can apply?

- ★ The **spouse** of a person serving a term of **imprisonment**

### What do I need?

- Your National ID Card
  - Court extract/record of imprisonment
  - Marriage Certificate
- 

### Who can apply?

- ★ A person who was (cohabitating) living with a person of the *opposite sex* for a period of **three years or more** before the latter began serving a term of **imprisonment**

### What do I need?

- Your National ID Card
  - ID Card of person of the opposite sex
  - Proof that you lived with person for three years- shared bills, affidavit
  - Court extract/record of imprisonment
- 

### Who?

- ★ a child that the board decides is in need based

 Remember: Proof is important! You always need documentation. It backs up what you're saying.



## TIPS AND FAQs

### **Who is a government medical officer?**

This is a licensed doctor. You can find one at your health center through the Regional Health Authority (RHA) or at the Medical Research Foundation (MRF).

### **What do I need from this medical officer to prove physical and mental disability?**

The doctor will examine you and fill out a form that provides information about your disability and describes its severity. They should then return this form to you.

### **Do I need an updated birth certificate?**

You need a computerised birth certificate or birth certificate with an accompanying affidavit where applicable.



## TIPS AND FAQS

### **What is an affidavit?**

An affidavit is a document or written statement that is sworn to be true in front of a Commissioner of Affidavits. The document must be signed by you both.

### **How do I get an affidavit?**

You can request an affidavit from the following: Justice of the Peace, Notary Public, Judge, Magistrate, or Commissioner of Affidavits.

### **I don't have a printer. How can I make copies?**

Printing and copying services are available at NALIS public libraries. Black and white prints cost 25 cents.



**Birth, Death and Marriage Certificates** are applied for through the Ministry of Legal Affairs (MOLA).

This process can be done in person or online through <https://rgd.legalaffairs.gov.tt/ttAFSClient/type>.



**National Identification cards** are applied for at Election and Boundaries (EBC) Regional Area Offices.



Our following series will include more detailed information about getting birth certificates, I.D Cards, deed polls, and more.



## **EXAMPLES**



*Here are some examples of cases where public assistance could be given when household income is judged as inadequate:*



**Jeffery is 12 years old and his parent has been hospitalized. An adult can apply for Public Assistance for him.**

**Jenna is 18 years old and cannot earn a living because of a disability. Jenna can apply for Public Assistance for herself.**

**Joseph is on Senior Citizen's pension and his wife is 55 and unemployed. Joseph can apply for Public Assistance for himself.**

**Rose and Dinah have a child Hannah who has a temporary but severe disability. Rose is the legal guardian of Hannah. Rose is unable to work because she takes care of Hannah. Rose can apply for Public Assistance.**

**Petra and Brenda have lived together in the same household for 3 years. Petra is imprisoned.**

**If Petra has a M gender marker and Brenda has an F gender marker (or vice versa), Brenda can apply for Public Assistance**



## DISABILITY ASSISTANCE GRANTS



**Disability assistance grants** provide money to 1) adults who are permanently unable to earn a livelihood because of a physical or mental disability determined by a medical officer. 2) minors who do not receive other disability grants over \$1,500.

### 1) Disability Assistance Grants for **adults**

**The grant for adults is \$2,000 TTD a month.**

Adults on disability cannot make more than \$12,000 TTD. a year

### 2) Disability Assistance grants for **minors**

**The grant for minors is \$\$1,500 TTD a month.**

Minors that get a similar benefit that is more than \$1,500 TTD cannot get disability assistance.



## Who can apply?

### A disabled person who is:

- ★ Age – You must be eighteen (**18**) years or older.
- ★ Residence – You must be a resident of Trinidad and Tobago for three (**3**) years before the date of application.  
Over those 3 years, the amount of time you have been **out of the country** cannot add up to more than **6 months**
- ★ Disability – In the opinion of the Local Board, you must be unable to earn a livelihood as a result of the disability.
- ★ Income – Your yearly income must be \$12,000 TTD or less.

### What do I need?

- National ID Card
- Second form of ID
- Original Birth Certificate
- Certification by a Government Medical Officer as being permanently disabled from earning a living



## DISABILITY GRANT MINOR

### Who can apply?

- ★ A **parent** or **legal guardian** of a *child* who is severely or completely disabled

#### Parent:

- Legal Resident/Citizen of Trinidad and Tobago
- 18 years or older

#### Child:

- Permanently disabled
- Legal Resident/Citizen of Trinidad and Tobago
- Younger than 18 years old
- Permanently living in Trinidad and Tobago

### What do I need?

- Your ID card number
- If legal resident, your resident number
- If child has passport, passport number and dates they left and returned to the country
- Disability Application Form for minors
- Disability Medical Report for minors



## TIPS AND FAQs

### **How long do I receive disability for?**

Disability Assistance is provided for life, given that conditions do not change.

### **What should I do if I gain employment?**

If there are changes in the status of your disability or if you gain employment you should make this known to the ministry.

### **How do I know if my disability is permanent or severe enough?**

The medical officer who examines you will determine this.

### **What if my disability is mental does this disqualify me from getting disability?**

People who have mental disabilities can apply for disability grants. A medical officer will decide if the disability is permanent and severe enough to qualify for the grant.

### **What if my disability is so severe that I cannot work but it is not permanent?**

If your disability is severe and not permanent you should try applying for a Public Assistance Grant.

## **EXAMPLES**



*Here are some examples of cases where disability grants may be given:*



**Peter is 18 and permanently disabled.**

**Dianne is disabled. She was born in Jamaica but came to Trinidad when she was 3 months old and has only left the country to go to Tobago. She is also a legal resident.**

*Here are some examples of cases where disability grants may not be given:*



**Junior is in an accident. The medical officer says he is mildly disabled and able to work.**

**Paula is severely disabled by a stroke. However, she recovers well and her disability is temporary.**

## FOOD SUPPORT PROGRAMME

The food support programme is put in place to help individuals and families who are struggling to afford food. This is meant to impact those who do not have any money or have very limited amounts.

The programme is currently implemented through a Food Support Card (debit card) via electronic cash transfer.

A condition of this programme is that ALL recipients must, unless otherwise advised, join a Developmental Programme.

1 – 3 persons	\$510.00
4 – 5 persons	\$650.00
6 + persons	\$800.00



**Who can apply?**

Persons with limited or no income.

- A Means Test is administered by the Ministry to determine eligibility.

**What do I need?**

- Two (2) recent passport sized photos
- National Identification Card and Electronic Birth Certificate for the applicant (with pin number)
- Birth certificates for all members of the applicant's household
- National Identification Card for all persons 15 years and above in the applicant's household
- ALL recent utility bills (telephone/internet, water electricity, and cable)
- Personal declaration of income
- If you receive government assistance; a recent cheque stub from Social Assistance Grants (e.g. Disability Assistance Grant, Public Assistance Grant, Senior Citizens' Pension)



**What do I need?**

- If employed, job letter
- If employed, pay slip
- If employed, NIS number
- Recent savings statement from a bank, credit union or other financial institution such as the Trinidad and Tobago Unit Trust Corporation;
- If you rent, a rent receipt
- If you are a homeowner, a mortgage statement
- If you are landlord, proof of property rental
- If you a land owner, a land tax receipt

Ask about getting a social worker who can work on your case where possible. This means there will be someone who can help check on your case and keep you informed about your application.



# RENTAL ASSISTANCE

This grant is used to help people who are eligible and temporarily cannot pay their rent, or who need a new place to live and cannot afford the first payments.

If you get this grant, it is given for 3 months at first.

If you need more time, the Ministry will review your case and decide if to extend the grant for another 3 months (second time).

If you need more time, the Ministry will review your case and decide if to extend the grant for another 3 months (third time).

If you need more time, the Ministry will review your case one final time and decide if to extend the grant for another 3 months (fourth time).

1	1st - 3rd month	\$2,500.00 or less
2	3rd - 6th month	\$2,500.00 or less
3	6th - 9th month	\$1,500.00 or less
4	9th -12th month	\$1,000.00 or less



## **APPLYING**

### **Who can apply?**

People who are struggling to pay rent with limited funds or are in emergency situations (e.g. facing eviction, or the victim of domestic violence or a fire).

### **What do you need?**

- Your ID Card
- Letter from Landlord
- Copy of Landlord's ID card
- Proof of Landlord's ownership of property
- Ability to pay rent after 3-month period



Again, ask about getting a social worker who can work on your case where possible. This means there will be someone who can help check on your case and keep you informed about your application.

## FORMS

Included in this guide are:

- Disability Form for Minors
- Disability Medical Form for Minors
- Disability Form for Adults
- Means Test Form

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Join our mailing list for updates and check our website at [caisott.org](https://caisott.org) to continue receiving each edition and our compilation of these guides.

## READY SET KNOW!

**Social Services Navigation Guide**  
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