

**NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES SECTION
SPECIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE BLIND PROGRAM**

Section:	Chapter 1
Title:	Eligibility Criteria - Overview
Revision History:	Revised 08/02

An applicant's eligibility for Special Assistance for the Blind is based on four criteria: I) vision status; II) need, as defined by the service; III) income; and IV) residency. These criteria are defined below:

I. VISION STATUS

A. The individual must have a visual acuity which constitutes legal blindness. Legal blindness is defined as a visual acuity of 20/200 or less, best corrected, or a field of vision in the better eye to such a degree that its widest diameter subtends an angle no greater than 20 degrees. (Reference: North Carolina General Statutes: 105-249)

B. The State Consulting Ophthalmologist is the final authority for determining if applicants meet and continue to meet the visual criteria for SAB eligibility.

C. Verification of Vision Status

Proof of an individual's visual acuity will be based on a completed eye examination report which reflects his/her current visual condition. The eye examination report must be dated and signed by a medical or eye care professional. Acceptable report forms are:

1. DSB-2202: Report of Eye Examination, which is completed, dated, and signed by a medical or eye care professional; or
2. A written statement on official letterhead signed and dated by a medical or eye care professional which states, at minimum, the individual's visual acuity in both eyes with best correction, date of examination, and primary diagnosis.

After eligibility has been determined, a copy of the eye report must remain in the consumer's case record as proof of eligibility based on vision.

Pages 12-13 in this Manual contain more detailed information on visual eligibility criteria.

The eye report which determines eligibility for Special Assistance for the Blind must be countersigned by the State Consulting Ophthalmologist.

II. NEED

The applicant/recipient must be in need of food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities of life and has insufficient means for his/her own support and has no relative or other persons in this state able to provide for him/her who is legally responsible for his/her maintenance.

Although most recipients of SAB reside in a rest home setting, an individual can be eligible at home if he/she has a special one time need which can not be met by any other program and/or if he/she does not receive any other public assistance from other programs. An example of an one-time need would be for an expensive medical care special item such as a wheelchair. Also, someone who does not qualify for SSI due to excess property and who does not have other income might be eligible while he/she disposed of the property. It should be noted that the payment standards for SAB are extremely low. More details of special eligibility circumstances may be found in Chapters 6 and 7 later in this manual.

III. INCOME

A. Unearned Income

Unearned income is not subject to the rule concerning disregarded income but includes pensions, unemployment benefits, managed rental property, interest or investment, and other income that the consumer receives in which he/she does not manage or actively work to earn the income. Income that is regularly available from relatives shall be treated as unearned income for budgeting purposes. There will be a disregard amount set by the Legislature from this unearned income in computing the budget for an individual. Where there is no unearned income, this amount will be added to the total needs.

B. Earned Income

Earned income is income in cash or in kind earned through wages, salary, commissions, or other profit from employment and self-employment activities.

Earned income does not include:

- 1) returns from capital investments in which the consumer is not actively engaged;
- 2) benefits accrued as compensation or reward for services; and
- 3) compensation for unemployment.

Additional information about income and budgeting can be found in Chapters 6 and 7 in this manual.

IV. RESIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

A. U.S. Residence

An individual must be a U.S. citizen or an alien admitted to the U.S. by Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) under a specific immigration status. See Residency section, page 18 of Chapter 4.

B. N.C. Residence

An individual must be making his/her home in North Carolina voluntarily with the intent to remain. A child is a resident of the state in which the parent or parents are living other than on a temporary basis. See page 17 for specific rules applying to residency and payment issues for children in a specialized residential community center. Also, see pages 32-34 regarding specific information on moving in and out of North Carolina.

C. County Residence

The applicant for SAB should apply in the county in which he/she is currently residing with the intention of remaining in that county. Exceptions can be made to this policy when good “customer service” is best achieved by making an exception. It is acceptable for a representative of a specialized residential community center to assist with or make the application for the legally blind child who has been placed in the facility. Also, an adult in an adult care home may complete an application for SAB even though he/she has been placed out of his/her legal county of residence. The caseworker (either the county DSS worker or SWB) should notify the county of legal residence that an application has been taken and is being forwarded to the county of legal residence for completion and/or forwarding to the Eligibility Specialist for SAB with the Division of Services for the Blind. See pages 35-37 for information on special circumstances relating to county residence.

D. Institutional Status

N.C. General Statutes prohibit Special Assistance for the Blind payments to a person who is an inmate of a public institution and/or a person who is a patient in an institution for mental illness.

A public institution is an institution that is the responsibility of a governmental unit or over which a government unit exercises administrative control (e.g. state mental hospital, prison, etc.).