



MEDICAL BENEFITS BOARD

ST. JOHN'S, ANTIGUA

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22nd July 2015

PRESS RELEASE

Voluntary registration and MBS Benefits

The implementation of the voluntary registration provisions of the Medical Benefits Act 2010 and the Medical Benefits Regulations 2011 as of Monday 3rd August, 2015, will seek to ensure that persons who benefit from the Medical Benefits Scheme (MBS) make a monetary contribution towards the benefits received, no matter how small.

In the last year 26,119 persons received benefits including over 3 million dollars in refunds and paid no contributions to the Scheme. Historically, subsets of non-contributing beneficiaries have existed since the beginning of the Medical Benefits Scheme some 35 years ago. This is because under the previous Medical Benefits Act a person diagnosed by a medical practitioner as having one of the listed chronic non-communicable diseases covered by MBS automatically qualified for membership and benefits. These individuals receive medication for the covered diseases, refunds for laboratory tests, and overseas treatment as well as hospitalization and a basket of services at the Mount St. John's medical Centre. Membership and benefits are also automatic for children under the age of 16, persons over that age of 70, and persons who are permanently incapacitated and unable to work.

On the issue of voluntary registration as stipulated by the Medical Benefits Act and Regulations persons who are not employed, not liable to pay contributions and receive benefits will be able to make an application for, and be issued with a certificate of voluntary registration and become eligible for benefits. However, these individuals may be required to pay a monthly contribution of EC \$20.00. Similarly, when an individual loses his or her job, he or she can also apply for voluntary registration to ensure benefits are maintained after 3 months of unemployment and until new employment is gained. The individual may be required to make a contribution of EC

\$20.00. Additionally, existing classes of members receiving benefits and not contributing to the Scheme will be classed as voluntary registrants and may be required to make a contribution of EC \$20.00 The premise for the foregoing is to ensure that those members who are financially able to contribute and receive benefits do so, as opposed to the previous paradigm of an individual having contributed for twenty-six weeks or having not contributed at all becoming a beneficiary for life.

The Medical Benefits Board on 1st June, 2015, announced that it was moving to fully implement all the provisions of the Medical Benefits Act 2010 and Medical Benefits Regulations 2011 on 3rd August, 2015, a transition that has implications for contributions, membership and benefits.

