

THE MEANS TEST AND CHILDREN'S GRANTS

Government provides grants for certain people such as elderly people or people living with disabilities and for specific groups of children. There are three grants that may be given to children:

1. Child Support Grant

Child Support Grant (R200 a month in 2007): this may be given to a person who takes care of a child under the age of 11 years. From 1st April 2005 it will be given for children under the age of 14 years.

2. Care Dependency Grant

Care Dependency Grant (R870 a month in 2007): this is given to a person who is taking care of a child who is severely disabled or very ill, and needs special care because he or she cannot be left alone and needs help full time at home.

3. Foster Child Grant

Foster Child Grant (R620 a month in 2004): for a person who has been appointed in the place of parents by a Court, to take care of someone else's child.

If you want to apply for any of these grants, the government asks you to prove that you really need the money. This is called the "means test".

THE MEANS TEST

What are your "means"?

There are two words used for the money you get regularly to live on.

The one word is "**means**" – HOW you pay for the needs of yourself and your family - the **means** you use for daily living .

The other word is "**income**" – the money that COMES IN to the home regularly is your income.

The government only wants to pay grants to the poorest people.

People who earn enough money of their own, will not be given a grant.

And so the government tests or checks your income (your "means") to make sure that you really do need a grant.

Qualifying for a grant

If you pass this means test then you are said to **qualify** for a grant.

WHAT WILL BE CHECKED FOR THE MEANS TEST?

INCOME: The following things, if they apply to you, will be added together and the total checked for the means test:

- The money you earn for work, AFTER you have paid UIF, medical aid, pension and tax
- Any money you get from pension funds, insurance or savings accounts
- The money you get from rent paid by any people, even if they are members of your own family.
- The money you get from selling vegetables or crops or from cattle, sheep, goats or chickens or other livestock.

A husband and wife's income will be added together for the means test for the Child Support Grant and the Care Dependency Grant.

This is called the "joint income".

Maintenance paid by one parent for a child will also count as joint income.

LETTERS and DOCUMENTS TO SHOW YOUR INCOME

You will be asked to bring any letters or forms you have that show the money you have to live on and show if you own a house.

If you are married your husband, or your wife, will have to do the same to show your "joint income".

These might be:

- wage slip or receipt
- UIF card
- discharge certificate
- bank statements for 3 months in a row
- pension or savings accounts book

If you have no letters or documents about your income, you need an AFFIDAVIT:

Affidavit:

To make an affidavit, you write a letter explaining what you want to say. When you have written this letter, take it to the Police Station and ask them to sign and stamp it. You have to say to them that you "swear", or make a solemn promise, that what you have written is the truth.

The "affidavit" is a legal document and it must be true.

If it can be shown that you did not tell the truth, then you can have a case brought against you.

(Other people who are registered “Commissioners of Oaths” can also stamp and sign the affidavit. These may be bank managers or lawyers or even school principals, in some cases.)

For the Means Test, you say in your affidavit what your income is (if you have any) and why you need the grant.

- You might want to say that you have never had a job.
- Or you might want to say that you lost your job as a domestic worker and never had a UIF card.
- You might need to say that your husband left you and you do not know where he is working or staying.
- You might write that you do not get money for your child from the father.

Just explain your situation.

LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS THAT SHOW THE CHILD’S INCOME:

For the Foster Child Grant and the Care Dependency Grant, if the child has income that belongs to him or her, you need to show where the money comes from and how much it is.

The letters and documents might be one or more of the following:

- a Will showing what the child was left and then letters from the lawyer (Executor) showing the way the inheritance was paid out
- a savings book in the name of the child
- a letter if there is a Trust
- a letter about Insurance money for the child.

THE CHILD SUPPORT GRANT

MEANS TEST FOR THE CHILD SUPPORT GRANT

Your income will be checked if you are single.

The joint income of husband and wife will be checked if you are married

1. If you live in a town (urban) area the means test depends on the type of house you live in
 - (a) **Formal dwelling** –this is a house with brick or concrete or asbestos blocks – you need to earn less than R9,600 a year (R800 a month)
 - (b) **Informal dwelling (shack)** – you need to earn less than R13,200 a year (R1,100 a month)

2. If you live in a country area (rural area) then the type of house does not matter.
You need to earn less than R13,200 a year (R1,100 a month)

FOSTER CHILD GRANT

MEANS TEST FOR THE FOSTER CHILD GRANT

The foster-parent does not have to pass a means test.

But there is a means test for the child:

The child's own income must be less than twice the amount of the grant.

The grant at present is R6360 a year (R530 a month), so the child must not earn more than R12,720 a year (R1,060 a month).

LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS THAT SHOW THE CHILD'S INCOME:

If the child has income that belongs to him or her, you need to show where the money comes from and how much it is (See page 2)

CARE-DEPENDENCY GRANT

Means test for the care dependency grant:

Your income, if you are unmarried, should not be more than R4,000 a month (R48,000 a year) to qualify for the Care Dependency Grant.

The joint income, of husband and wife together, must also be below R4,000 a month.

Care-dependent children who have their own income – perhaps from an insurance company if they were disabled in a car accident – also have to qualify under a means test.

A child will only get the grant if his or her income is less than twice the amount of the grant.

As the grant is R740 a month (R8 880 a year), the child must have an income less than R1,480 a month (R17 760 a year).

LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS THAT SHOW THE CHILD'S INCOME:

If the child has income that belongs to him or her, you need to show where the money comes from and how much it is (See page 2)

QUESTIONS THAT ARE OFTEN ASKED

Can I get a grant if I am employed?

If you are asking for the Child Support Grant or Care Dependency Grant, your wages may stop you getting a grant if they are high, as long as your income is below the **MEANS TEST** you can get a grant(See page 2)

What if my husband or wife is employed – can I get a grant?

If you are asking for the Child Support Grant or Care Dependency Grant, you and your husband or wife's wages will be put together as "joint income" for the **MEANS TEST**. If the "joint income" is below the means test, you can get the grant.

Can I get a Child Support Grant if my husband or wife pays maintenance for the child?

Yes – but it will count as income.

If I am married and my husband or wife has left me and is living somewhere else, how do I prove his or her income? Especially if that income is not contributing to supporting my children or myself?

His (or her) income will not count as "joint income" if it is not being used for you and the children in the household. You will most probably need to write an "affidavit" to explain this (See page 2).

I am not married, but live with a partner. Will his or her income be counted as "joint income"?

No, a partner's income will not be part of the "joint income" unless he or she is supporting and paying maintenance for a child.

Information kindly lent to Childline SA by ACCESS – www.aces.org.za