

KHULUMANI ALERT ON AMENDMENTS IN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR EDUCATION FOR PERSONS DECLARED VICTIMS BY THE TRC, THEIR DEPENDANTS OF RELATIVES: 11 SEPTEMBER 2017

The Department of Justice has amended the existing regulations on education assistance to allow for additional monetary assistance for which applications can be made for persons declared victims by the and / or their dependants or relatives. This assistance will only be provided in respect of programmes leading to a qualification and covers the details of additional monetary assistance for which an application can be made, including for devices, for meals and for the settlement of outstanding debts at the institution.

These amended payments are payable from 1 January 2018. The forms of assistance include fees (such as registration costs, tuition fees, costs relating to student counselling, work placement and other administrative costs), boarding and transport allowances, a meal allowance, an allowance to purchase textbooks and a device, and an amount to settle a debt at a college or a higher education institution and an allowance when a person works as part of his or her learnership or apprenticeship.

Some definitions:

A dependant is any person to whom the TRC-identified victim has or had a legal or customary duty to support, including children, grandchildren and the spouse of the identified victim. Relatives who qualify are a parent, or a person who exercises or who exercised parental responsibility over a victim; a person married to a victim under any law, custom or belief; or a child of a victim, whether born in or out of wedlock or who was legally adopted.

To qualify for basic education assistance, the applicant must be a member of a household which earns less than R153 965.00 gross income per year; or must be a member of a vulnerable household.

To qualify for higher education and training assistance, the applicant must be a member of a household which earns less than R198 000.00 gross income per year; or must be a member of a vulnerable household.

A vulnerable household is a household consisting of four (4) or more members where:

- the majority of members are over the age of 65 years;
- the majority of members are receiving social assistance;
- one member is physically or mentally disabled;
- one member is under 18 years of age and has to work;
- only one of the members is working.

The requirement to renew assistance annually: Students / learners who received assistance for the 2017 academic year must re-apply for the 2018 academic year. Academic results for 2017 must be attached to the application. Support is available for only four years of higher education.

Regarding devices:

A "device" is defined as:

(a) accessories, equipment, an instrument, a tool or any other similar item or article and protective gear or clothes; and

(b) in the case of an electronic device, the software required for the proper functioning of the device.

It excludes an assistive device required by a person with a disability.

The amount for which an application can be made for an electronic device:

(i) Payment of a once-off allowance not exceeding R7 000,00 to purchase a device; and

(ii) on submission of the motivation, payment of a once-off allowance not exceeding R3 000,00 to purchase a device that is compulsory for the programme, training or learning.

The application must be supported by a motivation on a letterhead of the college or institution concerned that certifies that the device is compulsory for the programme, training or learning. A beneficiary who received a device in terms of this regulation becomes the owner thereof and must ensure that the device is used for the purposes for which it is intended and that it is safeguarded against loss or damage at all times by being insured.

Regarding meals assistance:

Payment of an allowance of R1 600,00 per month, not exceeding R16 000,00 per annum, can be made for meals, as long as only the cost of accommodation does not include the cost for meals.

Regarding the settlement of debts to an educational institution, a once-off amount not exceeding R65 000,00 may be paid to settle a debt, incurred prior to the 2015 academic year, of a victim or a relative or dependant of a victim, which is owed to a college or a higher education institution. The amount may only be paid on submission of proof

(a) by the person in charge of finances of the relevant college or higher education institution of the debt and the amount thereof; and

(b) that this person also confirms in writing that the relative or dependant of the victim will be allowed to register with the college or higher education institution in the next academic semester or year after the settlement.

Applications for this additional monetary assistance has to be made on the form identified as AMENDMENT OF REGULATIONS RELATING TO ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS IN RESPECT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING: PROMOTION OF NATIONAL UNITY AND RECONCILIATION ACT, 1995 available on Khulumani's website and social media.