



## **Department of Social and Family Affairs**

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### **Minister Announces €26M Funding For Back To School Expenses**

#### ***Brennan Says Thousands More May Be Entitled to Funding Than Are Currently Claiming It***

Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D., has approved €26 million, under his Department's Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance scheme, to help parents with the cost of school clothing and footwear for the new school year.

More than 157,000 students benefited from the targeted support scheme last year. Minister Brennan is urging those on social welfare payments who may qualify for the allowance that have not been applying to do so as it is an important support at a time of particular financial strain.

Minister Brennan said: "I fully appreciate the enormous financial pressure many parents are under when it comes to meeting the cost of uniforms and footwear for the new school year. In an effort to help meet some of the financial strain families, particularly those on low incomes, feel at this time of year, I've approved funding of €26 million for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance, an increase of €8 million on payments under the scheme last year. While over 157,000 children were helped last year through the scheme, I am very concerned that tens of thousands of families on social welfare payments who may qualify for the scheme appear not to be applying for the financial support for whatever reason despite all the publicity and promotion the scheme is given. I am appealing to people on welfare or low-income employment to carefully examine the scheme conditions. This scheme is there to help those who genuinely need support in getting their children outfitted for the new school year."

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance is a targeted payment designed to help people depending on certain social welfare and Health Service Executive (HSE) payments, or taking part in approved employment schemes or training courses, with the cost of children's school clothing and footwear. It is also available to people on low incomes who are getting Family Income Supplement.



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The payment, which is income related, is funded by the Department of Social and Family Affairs and is administered by the HSE. Parents get €120 for each eligible child aged between 2 and 11 years and receive €190 for each child aged between 12 and 22 years. Parents can apply to their local HSE office for funding under the Scheme up to the end of September.

In a further bid to make improvements to the scheme Minister Brennan has also increased the additional income disregard for entitlement to the scheme from €50 to €100. The Income Limits now for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Scheme will be €100 in excess of the Old Age Contributory Pension rate or the Widow/ers Contributory Pension rate.

A couple with 1 child whose weekly income is at or below €441.40 may qualify for the Allowance. A couple with two children whose weekly income is at or below €460.70 may qualify. If they have three children, they may have income of €480.00 and qualify. (For families with more children, the income limit is increased by €19.30 for each additional child).

A lone parent with one child could have income of up to €314.90 per week and qualify for a payment. (For lone parent families, with more than one child, the income limit is increased by €21.60 for each additional child.)

Also for the first time in the history of the scheme people in receipt of the Orphans' Contributory Pension and the Orphans Non-contributory Allowance may also qualify for a payment. This addition to the scheme is estimated to cost €0.08 million in 2006.

Last year, a Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance was paid in respect of 157,254 children at a cost of €16.7 million; 99,195 were aged between 2 and 11 years, 51,242 were aged between 12 and 17 years and 6,817 were aged between 18 and 22 years.\* (statistical breakdown below)

Minister Brennan also said that in light of the Governments ongoing commitment to alleviating Child Poverty he is increasing funding for the School Meals Scheme by



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some €2 million for 2006. At present approximately 1,000 schools are eligible to participate in the two School Meals Programmes, the School Meals (Local Projects) Scheme and the Urban School Meals scheme. In 2005 the expenditure on the School Meals Scheme was some €8.3 million. The increased funding will allow for the current number of participating schools to be increased and the amounts per meal to be reviewed.

**Ends**

### **\*Statistics of those who benefited in 2005 from BSCFA:**

<b>HSE</b>	<b>Counties</b>	<b>No. of Children</b>	<b>No. of Families</b>
ERHA/Mid Leinster	Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow	53,830	27,844
Western	Galway, Mayo, Roscommon	16,012	7,678
Southern	Cork, Kerry	22,047	10,765
South Eastern	Kilkenny, Carlow, Waterford, Wexford, part of Tipperary	18,375	10,326
North Eastern	Louth, Meath, Cavan, Monaghan	12,963	6,098
Mid-West	Part of Tipperary, Limerick, Clare	12,167	5,662
North Western	Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal	12,378	6,204
Midland	Laois, Offaly, Westmeath, Longford	9,482	4,530
<b>Total</b>		<b>157,254</b>	<b>79,107</b>