

BARRIERS TO INCOME ASSISTANCE

- ❖ ***Delay***
- ❖ ***Discouragement***
- ❖ ***Diversion***
- ❖ ***Denial***

1. **The 3 week wait:** when people first seek assistance, they are required to conduct a three-week job search before an “in-take interview” is conducted. In practice this **delay** can be 4-6 weeks.
2. **The 2 year “independence” test:** to be eligible for assistance, applicants must demonstrate that they have earned a minimum level of income for two consecutive years – they must prove they had at least \$7,000 of employment income or 840 hours of employment per year for 2 years running. This new eligibility rule can **deny** benefits to an individual regardless of their financial need.
3. **Administrative practices restricting entry:** the implementation of electronic “alternate service delivery” systems, including directing initial enquiries to a 1-800 line and the compulsory use of an on-line computer orientation **discourage** many people from attempting to apply as they are unfamiliar with the technology required or have little access to the technology.

As a result of these new policies, implemented in 2002, people are being **diverted** to increased hardship rather than employment. Studies have shown that the most vulnerable in our society are finding it more and more difficult to receive the assistance they need and many have ended up on the streets of Vancouver. It is no accident that the number of homeless in the Greater Vancouver area has increased 300% since 2002 and, more than 75% of the street homeless reported they are not on welfare.

“We think we could almost halve the number of people on the street [in Vancouver] if you just got people on welfare who were eligible for welfare.”

Taken from: Bruce Wallace, Seth Klein, Marge Reitsma-Street, *Denied Assistance: Closing The Front Door On Welfare In BC* (VIPIRG and CCPA, March, 2006).