

The NE Angle



**A Guide to
Masonic Benevolence
in Alberta**

The North-East Angle

A Guide to Masonic Benevolence

2017

Foreword

Every Masonic Brother is conducted to the NE angle of the Lodge where he is taught the lesson of Charity. This lesson is taught symbolically, but the practical application of how a Lodge is to cope with a Brother who needs help can be much more difficult than the gentle embarrassment we all remember at the NE angle. Many questions arise such as these:



- ❖ Is every Brother entitled to assistance when he asks for it?
- ❖ Who provides financial assistance when a Brother needs it?
- ❖ Is a Brother's family entitled to assistance?
- ❖ What kinds of assistance may be provided?
- ❖ What about Brothers who have demitted, or who are not in good standing?
- ❖ Do charities qualify for assistance from a Lodge?
- ❖ What if the Brother needing assistance is from another jurisdiction?
- ❖ How can help be given to a Brother in the midst of a bankruptcy?

While the Grand Lodge of Alberta provides answers to questions about Benevolence in its *Constitution and Regulations*, answers might not be easy to find during a Brother's need. This pamphlet is intended to provide some ready answers, and point out where more assistance may be found.

Who is eligible for the charity of a Lodge?

There is a difference between 'benevolence' and 'charity' within the overall concept of Charity that each Mason learns at the NE angle.

According to II.1.G.3.i of the Book of Constitution and Regulations, "grants of *benevolence* may be given to members of constituent Lodges in this jurisdiction or to their relatives." Essentially, this means that *benevolence* can be given to any Mason in good standing or to their families; however, the Board of Benevolence has had to restrict its funding of benevolence to Masons of good standing *for one year or more*.

Within reason, any Lodge can provide funds toward any worthy cause. Lodges assist financially in the building of parks, in sending underprivileged children to summer camp and in other ways too numerous to mention. In fact, through the Masonic Foundation, there is solid assistance for a Lodge's approved charitable works. Outside of a tyled Lodge, Lodges may raise funds to assist individuals or the community, but this is *charity* and is not the same thing as Masonic *benevolence*.

Where does the money come from?

Lodges may raise funds for charities in any number of ways, but **any funds raised in a *tyled* Lodge may *only* be used for benevolence** among Brothers and their families. (See II.1.G.3.h)

Money needed for benevolence that is beyond a Lodge's ability to provide may be provided by an application through the Grand Secretary to the Board of Benevolence. That money would be taken from the Relief Savings Account of Grand Lodge. (See II.1.G.3.f)

Helping a Brother in Distress

(Please remember that all steps must remain confidential!)

If you become aware of a Brother in need:

1. Contact the Worshipful Master of your Lodge immediately and give him the information that you have about the distressed Brother.
2. If you are close to the Brother, approach him directly to attempt to find out the nature of his problems.
3. Encourage the Brother to allow you to keep the Worshipful Master informed of your findings.
4. If you are able, provide any short-term, immediate assistance that you possibly can.



❖ If the Brother needing assistance is *not under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Alberta*, you should provide whatever assistance your Lodge is able to provide and contact that Brother's home Lodge for further assistance. The Board of Benevolence of the Grand Lodge of Alberta is unable to provide financial assistance in this circumstance. (II.1.G.i.1)

❖ The same regulation, which requires a Brother to be "a member of a Constituent Lodge in this Jurisdiction," precludes assistance to Brothers suspended in the Jurisdiction.

What the Lodge Should Do:

1. Immediately upon being advised of any Brother or relative of that Brother who might be in need of assistance, the Worshipful Master should make direct personal contact with that Brother (or relative) to attempt to determine the nature and extent of the problem. All dealings must be confidential, and that confidentiality is best maintained if few people are aware of the problem.
2. Make sure that immediate requirements of food, clothing and shelter are met. *Do not wait for the completion of forms or studies, or for a response from the Board of Benevolence before meeting these basic needs.*

3. The Worshipful Master should draw on expertise that may be available from among the membership of his Lodge. Depending on the nature of the situation, from a Lodge member such as an accountant, a builder or a mechanic, there might be available expertise to assist the Brother with his problem at low or no cost.
4. If banks or other credit institutions are involved, go to them with the Brother seeking assistance to see if arrangements can be made to either reduce or delay part or all of any debt involved.
5. *If the Brother is in bankruptcy, look for professional guidance, especially before advancing cash to that Brother.* Well-intended assistance to a Brother in bankruptcy can worsen the problem greatly.
6. If social assistance agencies are involved, seek the help of those agencies since some types of funding already being received by the Brother might be disrupted by his receiving further assistance.
7. Provide whatever assistance, financial or otherwise, that is within the ability of the Lodge.



The first responsibility for Benevolence lies with the Lodge. The Board reviews each case on an individual basis and, at the same time, also reviews the financial situation of the Lodge. From the financial statements filed with Grand Lodge, the Board determines whether or not the Lodge is attempting to provide a fair percentage of any funds required. *Constitution and Regulations* provides further information about this. (II.1.G.3.k)

What if the Lodge cannot provide the assistance that is needed?

1. When amounts of money or the requirements of the situation are beyond the ability of the Lodge and its membership to fulfil, then the Worshipful Master may apply to the Board of Benevolence for further assistance.
2. To make application to the Board of Benevolence, the Worshipful Master should immediately obtain a copy of Form 180, "Petition for Temporary Assistance." that can be downloaded from the Grand Lodge of Alberta website (www.freemasons.ab.ca). He should then meet with the Brother or relative requesting assistance, and ensure that the form is filled out completely.
3. Fill out Form 180.
 - a. Download and complete this form from the Grand Lodge of Alberta website (www.freemasons.ab.ca). It is in the 'Members Only' area under the 'Support' tab.
 - b. The information required on Page 1 provides basic information needed by the Board of Benevolence and is a reminder of the confidential nature of the petition.
 - c. Page 2 is intentionally blank.
 - d. Pages 3 and 4 are intended to provide a proper and complete outline of the situation of the Brother or relative seeking assistance. From the information supplied there, the Worshipful Master should determine the amount and type of assistance required. *(Continued on the next page)*
- e. The information on page 5 is intended to help the Board to understand the situation of the Lodge in making its request.
4. Forward the completed form to the Grand Secretary.



❖ In preparing the Lodge's request for assistance, at no time should the name of the Brother (or relative) seeking assistance be revealed—except in the documentation provided to the Board of Benevolence.

❖ The Worshipful Master, working with his Secretary or Finance Committee, should first determine to what extent the Lodge is able to provide assistance and then work out the amount to be requested from the Board of Benevolence. The Board of Benevolence does not have any fixed ratio that is expected in this matter. All that is expected is that the Lodge do what it can.

❖ The Board of Benevolence exists to provide assistance, but it is also the trustee of funds for relief and benevolence. For that reason, it must have full information in order to assist any applicant.

What Happens Now?

1. The Lodge must forward the completed Petition for Temporary Assistance (Form 180) to the Grand Secretary.
2. The Grand Secretary will immediately contact the President of the Board of Benevolence.
3. The President of the Board will determine if immediate assistance is required, and if this is the case, and if Form 180 is in order, he can authorize some immediate relief.
4. At its next meeting, the Board of Benevolence will discuss ratifying any actions taken by the President and vote to provide any additional assistance that might be required.
5. The Grand Secretary will issue any authorized cheques. *All cheques are issued to the Lodge, not to the Lodge member in need of assistance.* It is the responsibility of the Lodge to ensure that any grants are properly applied.

6. It is also the responsibility of the Lodge to maintain contact with the Brother or relative in need and advise the Board about any change in circumstances. The Board will not terminate an ongoing grant without a direct request from the Lodge.
7. When a grant is issued, a case number will be assigned. To protect the confidentiality of anyone receiving assistance, that case number should be used in all further correspondence.
8. It is very important that any Lodge receiving a grant from the Board of Benevolence keep the Board up-to-date regarding any change to the circumstances of the recipient. The Worshipful Master of the Lodge should also advise the Board when funding is no longer needed, or if more funding is required.
9. *Please note that grants are for **temporary** assistance, and so are made for a twelve-month term.* A Lodge must reapply for funding each year for benevolence that would extend beyond one year. To avoid depleting the fund, a lifetime cap on benevolence has been established. If a lodge is contemplating recurring assistance, contact the Grand Secretary regarding that cap.

But what about . . . ?

- **Funerals?** The Board may not dispense funds for funeral expenses, except under extraordinary circumstances and with unanimous consent of Board members. (II.1.G.3.o.1)
- **Loans to Lodges?** The Board may not loan money to any Lodge. (II.1.G.3.o.2)

Further questions?

Further information about Masonic Benevolence can be found in *Constitution and Regulations* in Section II.1.G.3

Any other questions can be directed to the Grand Secretary.