

Welfare Benefits



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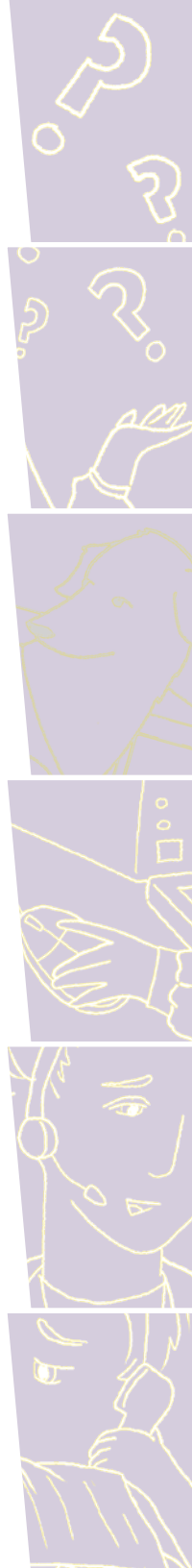
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See the back cover for how to get free LSS (Legal Aid BC) publications.



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Get more details at www2.gov.bc.ca

The government's online BC Employment & Assistance Policy & Procedures Manual has detailed information about welfare. They update the manual when they make changes to benefits. To find the manual online, go to **www2.gov.bc.ca**. In the search bar, type BCEA policy and procedure manual. Click the link to open the page.

How to contact the ministry

Phone: **1-866-866-0800**

You can talk to a ministry worker and ask questions. You may have to wait on the phone for a long time. If you have a phone, ask for a call back.

Email: **Go to myselfserve.gov.bc.ca**

If you have an online My Self Serve account, you can email questions to the ministry about monthly welfare benefits or supplements.

In person: **Your local ministry office**

You can find your local ministry office online at **myselfserve.gov.bc.ca**.

Or phone Service BC:

604-660-2421	(Greater Vancouver)
250-387-6121	(Victoria)
1-800-663-7867	(elsewhere in BC)

Introduction

When you qualify for welfare, you get money every month to pay for your **support** (daily living costs) and **shelter** (housing costs). In this booklet, monthly welfare benefits means the money you get for support and shelter. The amount you get depends on the type of monthly welfare you qualify for. The amount also depends on other things, such as the size of your family.

You and your family may also be able to get other welfare benefits called **supplements**. Supplements are other money or things you may qualify for in addition to your monthly welfare benefits. The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (the ministry) pays you these supplements if you qualify for them.

What's in this booklet

This booklet includes:

- samples of the monthly support rates and shelter rates the ministry pays for each type of welfare,
- an overview of all the other supplements you may qualify for,
- the type of monthly welfare you have to be on to qualify for the supplements, and
- how to get the supplements.

This booklet gives basic information about welfare benefits. If you need more help or advice, contact an **advocate** (community workers trained to help people).

See page 71 for where to find an advocate.

How you get supplements

The ministry pays you some supplements automatically. To get many others, you must apply and wait for ministry approval. The ministry doesn't tell you what supplements you qualify for. You have to ask about them.

After you read this booklet, if you think you qualify for supplements you're not getting, contact the ministry.

Phone:
1-866-866-0800

Or use your online
My Self Serve account:
myselfserve.gov.bc.ca

If you're Aboriginal

If you live on reserve in BC, apply to your band's social development worker for welfare benefits. For help, see the free Legal Aid BC booklet *Income Assistance on Reserve in British Columbia* at aboriginal.legalaid.bc.ca/read.



If you live off reserve in BC, contact the ministry to apply for welfare benefits. See page iv for contact information.

You may qualify for health benefits through the provincial First Nations Health Authority (FNHA). The FNHA Health Benefits program provides a range of health-related goods and services for dental and medical needs that provincial or other third-party health insurance plans don't cover for BC First Nations. For more information and to find out how to register, go to fnha.ca/benefits or phone **1-855-550-5454**.

Monthly Welfare

Types of monthly welfare

The ministry pays four types of monthly welfare to people who qualify:

- income assistance (IA)
- disability assistance (PWD)
- Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers benefits (PPMB)
- hardship assistance (HA)

The Legal Aid BC booklet *How to Apply for Welfare* gives more information about who qualifies for each type of welfare. See the back cover of this booklet for how to order.



Income assistance (IA)

To get income assistance you must:

- be 19 or over (some exceptions apply for youth under 19),
- have a low-enough income,
- be under the ministry's set limits for **assets** (things you own, including money in the bank),
- live in BC, and
- meet immigration rules.

If you're on income assistance, you get the lowest amount of monthly income. Most new welfare applicants start on this type of monthly welfare.

Disability assistance (PWD)

You may be able to get disability assistance if:

- you submit a person with disabilities (PWD) application to the ministry, and
- the ministry approves the PWD designation.

To qualify:

- you must be at least 18, have income and assets within the ministry's set limits, live in BC, and meet immigration rules;
- your disability must be severe, be expected to last at least two years, and restrict your daily living activities; and
- you must also need help from another person, an assistive device, or an assistance animal.

If you're on disability assistance, you get a higher monthly income, a wider range of medical benefits, a higher asset limit, and more income exemptions than on basic income assistance.

Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers benefits (PPMB)

You may be able to get Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers (PPMB) benefits if:

- you submit a PPMB application to the ministry, and
- the ministry approves the PPMB designation.

To qualify:

- you must have been on welfare for at least 12 months of the last 15 months;

- the ministry must agree your medical condition makes it difficult or impossible for you to look for work or keep a job; and
- you must have had your medical condition for one year, and it must last for at least two more years.

If you qualify for PPMB benefits, you get a slightly higher monthly income, a wider range of medical benefits, and more income exemptions than on basic income assistance.

Disability Alliance BC has a series of help sheets, with information about how to apply for the PWD and PPMB designations and other topics. You can get the help sheets online at **disabilityalliancebc.org** (click Publications).



Hardship assistance (HA)

If you don't qualify for income assistance, disability assistance, or PPMB benefits (even though you have the PWD or PPMB designation), you may be able to get hardship assistance. The ministry pays hardship assistance in specific situations. One example is when you're waiting for other income, such as Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, and you don't have money for your essential needs.

- You have to qualify for hardship assistance each month.
- You can get hardship assistance only for a short time.
- The kinds of supplements you can get are limited.
- In some situations, you have to repay hardship assistance, such as when you get your EI benefits.

Monthly welfare benefits

The ministry decides how much money you get each month based on the size of your **family unit**. A family unit includes you and your dependants. A **dependant** is your child or spouse (married or unmarried) who lives with you.

Your child must:

- be under 19;
- depend on you for food, shelter, and clothing; *and*
- live with you for more than half of each month. You may still get some money for rent if your child lives with you for at least 40 percent of each month.

Your older relatives or adult children aren't your dependants, even though they may live with you and depend on you. They can apply for welfare as their own family unit. That way, you all get more money to live on each month.

The monthly welfare for your family unit is made up of a **support allowance** and a **shelter allowance**.

Support allowance

The support allowance is for all your daily needs, including:

- food
- personal items
- clothing
- laundry

The support allowance includes everything except your shelter (your housing costs). If your shelter allowance isn't enough to pay your housing costs, you need to use some of your support allowance to pay your housing costs.

The support allowance depends on:

- the type of monthly welfare you get, and
- the size of your family unit. If your family unit has more than three people, you don't get more support allowance.

If you have children under 18 living with you, apply for the Canada Child Benefit from the federal government. If you aren't getting this benefit, see page 55.

Shelter allowance

The shelter allowance is for housing expenses such as:

- rent
- co-op housing charges
- utilities
- basic home phone or cellphone
- mortgage payments
- property taxes
- household insurance if you own a home (includes co-op housing)

The rate you get for shelter is what you pay for your housing, including utilities and phone, up to the **maximum** (full amount) for your family unit.

- If your housing costs are more than the maximum shelter rate, you have to take the difference out of your support amount.
- The shelter rate is the same for all types of monthly welfare.
- You get more shelter allowance for each member of your family unit.

Maximum shelter allowance rates (March 2018)

Family size	Amount	Family size	Amount
1 person	\$375	7 people	\$820
2 people	\$570	If your family has more than seven people, you add \$35 a month for each person.	
3 people	\$660		
4 people	\$700	In most cases, if you don't have shelter costs, you won't get a shelter allowance.	
5 people	\$750		
6 people	\$785		



☛ *The ministry and your landlord*

- The ministry asks you to get a “shelter confirmation” or “intent to rent” form that your landlord signs when you first rent a new place. When you first apply for welfare, you give permission to the ministry to contact your landlord if they need to check where you live and how much rent you pay.
- If you have a problem paying your rent on time, the ministry may want to pay your rent directly to your landlord.

☛ *If a family unit member is away*

If a member of your family unit isn’t living with you for a while, ask the ministry to include that person in your shelter allowance. The ministry may accept these reasons for family members to be away:

- in the hospital
- out of BC for a short time, with the ministry’s permission
- in an alcohol or drug treatment facility

If a family member recently died, ask the ministry to pay your shelter allowance for a short time at the same rate you got before they died.

☛ *If the ministry removes your children from your home*

If the Ministry of Children and Family Development has concerns about your children’s safety, they may **remove** (take) your children from your home. The ministry pays you the same shelter rate as long as you actively work to have your children returned to you. If you’re in this situation, ask an advocate for help (see page 71).

You have the right to get a lawyer if the Ministry of Children and Family Development is concerned about your children's safety. Contact Legal Aid BC to find out if you qualify for a free lawyer (see page 75).

Comforts allowance

If you live in a special care facility, a private hospital, or extended care in a hospital, the ministry doesn't pay you a support allowance and shelter allowance. The ministry pays the costs for you to stay there and also pays you a comforts allowance for your personal needs.

- If you're on income assistance or PPMB benefits, you get \$95 a month.
- If you're on disability assistance, you get \$170 a month and \$52 a month for transportation.
- If you're on hardship assistance, you don't qualify for a comforts allowance.

TIP: If you qualify for the comforts allowance, you may also qualify for crisis supplements (page 20) and a clothing supplement (see page 61).

Room and board

If you pay room and board, you don't get the full support allowance and shelter allowance. The ministry pays your room and board, and pays you a lower support amount for all other daily living needs.

- If you're on income assistance, PPMB benefits, or hardship assistance, you get \$60 a month for each adult in your family unit, and \$40 a month for each dependent child.

- If you're on disability assistance, you get \$75 a month in support and \$52 a month for transportation for each adult in your family unit with the PWD designation, \$60 a month for each adult in your family unit who isn't designated PWD, and \$40 a month for each dependent child.

The ministry doesn't pay more than the combined support and shelter maximum for your family unit.

The rules are different if you pay room and board to your parents (or your spouse's parents), or to your adult children (or your spouse's adult children). In this situation, the ministry doesn't pay for your room and board, and doesn't pay you a shelter allowance. The ministry pays you only the support allowance for a family unit of your size.

The above rules don't apply if someone in your family unit is 65 or over and gets Old Age Security benefits. In that case, your family unit gets the maximum shelter and support rates for a family of your size, even if you pay room and board.

TIP: If you have a room and board arrangement, you may get less money from the ministry than the full support allowance and shelter allowance. It may be possible for you to change your arrangement so you pay rent and food costs separately, instead of room and board. Then you may qualify for the full support and shelter allowances. This can happen even if you rent from your parents or adult children.

Monthly welfare rates

There are different rates for each type of monthly welfare. Your monthly rate also depends on whether you're single or have a spouse and dependent children living with you. Family units with members over age 65 usually get a higher rate.

To find all the rates online, go to www2.gov.bc.ca. In the search bar, type BCEA policy and procedure manual. Click the link to open the page. Under Resources, click All Rate Tables (on a cellphone, scroll to the bottom).

Sample income assistance rates			
Family size	Support allowance	Shelter allowance maximum	Total
Single person under 65	\$335.00	\$375.00	\$710.00
Couple under 65, no children	\$407.22	\$570.00	\$977.22
Single parent under 65, one child	\$475.58	\$570.00	\$1,045.58
Couple under 65, one child	\$501.06	\$660.00	\$1,161.06

If you're on hardship assistance (see page 5) and no one in your family unit has the PWD or PPMB designation, you get up to the same support allowance and shelter allowance as a family unit of your size on income assistance.

Sample disability assistance rates

Family size	Support allowance	Shelter allowance maximum	Total
Single person under 65	\$758.42	\$375.00	\$1,133.42
Couple under 65, no children, one adult on PWD	\$927.56	\$570.00	\$1,497.56
Couple under 65, no children, both adults on PWD	\$1,403.06	\$570.00	\$1,973.06
Single parent under 65 on PWD, one child	\$899.08	\$570.00	\$1,469.08
Couple under 65, one child, one adult on PWD	\$1,021.56	\$660.00	\$1,681.56
Couple under 65, one child, both adults on PWD	\$1,497.06	\$660.00	\$2,157.06

Each person with the PWD designation also gets the monthly transportation supplement (see page 23).

If you're on hardship assistance (see page 5) and someone in your family unit has the PWD designation, you can get up to the same support allowance and shelter allowance as a family unit of your size on disability assistance. Each person in your family unit who has the PWD designation also qualifies for the monthly transportation supplement.

Sample PPMB benefits rates

Family size	Support allowance	Shelter allowance maximum	Total
Single person under 65	\$382.92	\$375.00	\$757.92
Couple under 65, no children, one adult on PPMB	\$496.22	\$570.00	\$1,066.22
Couple under 65, no children, both adults on PPMB	\$552.06	\$570.00	\$1,122.06
Single parent under 65 on PPMB, one child	\$523.58	\$570.00	\$1,093.58
Couple under 65, one child, one adult on PPMB	\$590.06	\$660.00	\$1,250.06
Couple under 65, one child, both adults on PPMB	\$646.06	\$660.00	\$1,306.06

If you're on hardship assistance (see page 5) and someone in your family unit has the PPMB designation, you can get up to the same support allowance and shelter allowance as a family unit of your size on PPMB benefits.

Earnings exemption

If you qualify and get income assistance, disability assistance, or PPMB benefits for one month or more, then you can earn some money each month and the ministry won't **deduct** (take) it from your welfare. The amount you can earn and keep is called your **earnings exemption**. You must report any income you earn to the ministry.

The amount of your earnings exemption depends on what type of welfare you get, and the size of your family unit. For example, as of October 1, 2017, the earnings exemption for a single person is:

- \$400 a month on income assistance
- \$12,000 a calendar year on disability assistance
- \$700 a month on PPMB benefits

To find the complete list of earnings exemptions online, go to www2.gov.bc.ca. In the search bar, type BCEA policy and procedure manual earnings exemption. Click the link to open the page.

Supplements

These abbreviations show the type of welfare you have to be on to qualify for certain supplements:

IA	= income assistance
PWD	= disability assistance
PPMB	= Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers benefits
HA	= hardship assistance
MSO	= Medical Services Only (see page 28)

The term **youth under 19 on welfare** means they don't have an adult in their family unit. They may qualify for supplements noted in this booklet.

Housing-related supplements

Security deposit

☛ *Who qualifies:* **IA, PWD, PPMB, HA**

If you don't have the deposit for a place you want to rent, the ministry may loan you the money. You have to pay it back.

- The ministry **deducts** (takes off) \$20 every month from your cheque, starting with your second cheque after they pay your deposit. The deductions continue until you pay back the full amount.

- If you have two **outstanding** (still to pay) security deposit loans, the ministry usually won't loan you money for another security deposit.

There isn't an application form. To apply, tell a ministry worker you need a security deposit to rent a new place.

TIP: The ministry starts to deduct money from your cheque even if they're already deducting more than \$20 a month for other things; for example, you might also have to pay back hardship assistance. If you can't pay back more than \$20 a month, explain this to the ministry. They can wait to deduct the other money you owe until you pay back your security deposit loan.

Utility security deposit

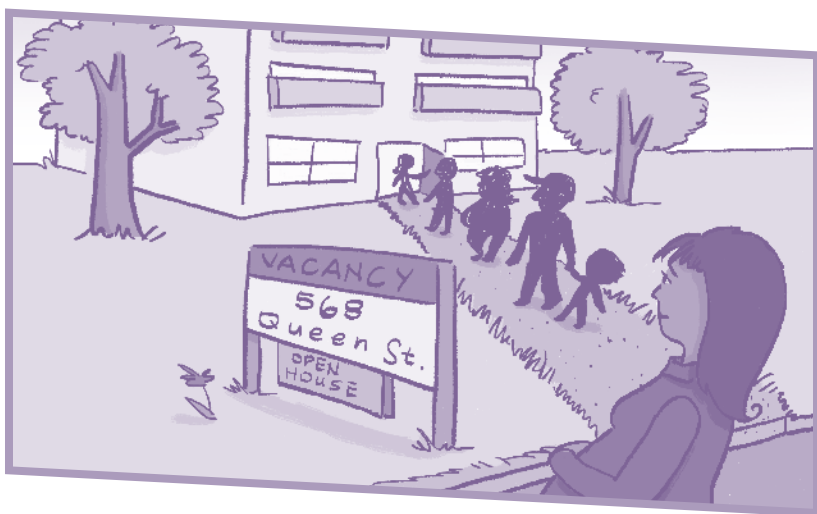
☞ **Who qualifies:** IA, PWD, PPMB, HA

Many utility companies make people with low incomes pay security deposits. If you have to pay a deposit to get electricity or natural gas, the ministry may loan you the money. You have to pay it back.

- The ministry deducts \$20 every month from your cheque, starting with your second cheque after they pay your deposit. The deductions continue until you pay back the full amount. You don't have to start making the payments until you pay off all your security deposits for housing.

There isn't an application form. To apply, tell a ministry worker you need a security deposit to get or continue to get electricity or natural gas.

TIP: Sometimes utility companies will forgo or reverse (cancel) security deposits. Contact them to see if you qualify.



Co-operative housing share purchase supplement

☛ **Who qualifies:** IA, PWD, PPMB

If you need to buy shares to move into a housing co-op, the ministry may pay 50 percent of the share purchase costs, up to \$850. To qualify, you must have been on welfare for at least the last three calendar months.

You have to agree to pay back the loan and sign a Promise to Pay form. You can choose to pay back the money in one of two ways:

- Have the ministry take money off your cheque every month.

Or

- Wait to pay back the loan until you move out of the co-op or go off welfare.

There isn't an application form. To apply, tell a ministry worker you need money to pay a share purchase so you can move into a housing co-op.

Prenatal shelter supplement

 **Who qualifies:** IA, PWD, PPMB

If you're single and pregnant, you can apply to add up to \$195 a month to your shelter allowance (includes room and board situations). To qualify, you must:

- be single and have no dependent children (no other children who live with you half of the time or more); *and*
- have shelter costs that are more than \$375 (current shelter rate for a single person), where you live now or where you plan to move.

There isn't an application form. To apply, ask your doctor, nurse practitioner, or registered midwife for a letter. The letter must say:

- you're pregnant and
- your expected delivery date.

You give the letter to the ministry.

Moving costs

 **Who qualifies:** IA, PWD, PPMB, HA

The ministry may pay your moving costs. They may also pay your storage costs if you have to store your belongings for a short time because of your move.

You must be in one of these situations:

- You (or your spouse) aren't working, and you're moving to take a job you (or your spouse) are offered anywhere in Canada (including in BC) that will significantly improve your situation.
- You're moving for your safety or the safety of someone else in your family unit.

- You're moving out of BC or Canada to improve your family's living conditions.
- The place you're renting has been condemned, or you have an eviction notice because your place will be sold or demolished.
- Your shelter costs would be much lower if you moved.

The ministry must approve moving costs *before* you move (pre-approval). If you don't get pre-approval, the ministry won't pay your moving or storage costs.

There isn't an application form. To apply, explain your situation to a ministry worker. The ministry may ask you to get prices from low-cost moving companies. If you're moving outside of BC, they may ask you for a financial statement to show you have no other way to pay for your moving costs.

Unexpected need

Crisis supplement

☞ **Who qualifies:** IA, PWD, PPMB, HA

If you have an unexpected need you must pay for, you have the right to apply for a crisis supplement. Sometimes this is called a crisis grant. You don't have to pay it back.

Unexpected needs can come up in many situations; for example, if you:

- lose necessary things in a fire,
- run out of fuel in cold weather,
- don't have food,

- are told your electricity will be cut off or it gets cut off,
- don't have enough clothes or bedding in winter, or
- have to make essential repairs on the house you own, such as fixing broken windows or doors.



You get a crisis supplement only if the ministry believes you have no other way to pay for the unexpected need and:

- the physical health of someone in your family will be in danger if you can't meet your unexpected need, or
- the Ministry of Children and Family Development will remove your child if you can't meet your unexpected need.

The ministry can't give crisis supplements worth more than two months of your monthly welfare benefits in a 12-month period. However, if you reach this limit, you may get another crisis supplement for electricity, water, or fuel for heating or cooking.

If you need a crisis supplement for food, shelter, or clothing, the amount of money you get is also limited.

- For food, you can get a maximum of \$20 a calendar month for each family member.
- For shelter, you get what you actually pay for shelter in a month, up to the maximum shelter rate for your family unit.
- For clothing, you get a maximum of \$100 over 12 months for each family member, or \$400 for a family unit, whichever amount is less.

There isn't an application form. To apply, explain your unexpected need to a ministry worker.

- You may have to give the ministry information that supports your request, such as a disconnection notice from a utility company.
- You must tell the ministry why you don't have money to pay for what you need.
- The ministry expects you to find where you can get help. For example, if the crisis supplement is for clothing or furniture, the ministry may ask you to look for second-hand items.

Crisis supplements aren't available to pay for health care goods or services.

If you get six or more crisis supplements in 12 months, the ministry may **administer** your monthly welfare benefits. This means the ministry sends you several cheques in small amounts during the month, instead of one cheque a month. They may also pay your rent directly to your landlord.

TIP: You have to tell the ministry why your need is “unexpected.” For example, if you say you need a new bed because yours is worn out, the ministry might say it’s not unexpected for a bed to wear out. But if your doctor says you need a new bed as soon as possible because yours causes you back pain, the ministry might agree your change in health is unexpected and you have an unexpected need for a new bed. Because you can’t use a crisis supplement to pay for health items, also make it clear you need a good mattress and not a hospital bed.

Transportation supplements

Monthly transportation supplement for PWD

☞ **Who qualifies:** PWD, HA with PWD designation, some MSO with PWD designation

If your family unit gets disability assistance or hardship assistance (including the comforts allowance or room and board), each person in the family with the PWD designation automatically gets a monthly transportation supplement. The monthly transportation supplement is in addition to the monthly disability assistance rate for support and shelter.

The monthly transportation supplement can be *either*:

- \$52 a month you can use to buy a bus pass or pay for other transportation, such as taxis or a HandyDART, or gas and insurance if you have a car; or
- a bus pass the ministry issues. The bus pass is good on a month-to-month basis.

- You can choose if you want a bus pass or \$52 each month. You don't pay a fee for the bus pass. If you lose your bus pass or it's stolen, you pay \$10 to replace it.
- You don't have to get a bus pass for a whole year — you can choose the months you want a bus pass and the months you want the \$52 transportation supplement.
- You don't have to apply for this supplement. But make sure you tell the ministry when you want to switch between a bus pass or the \$52 supplement.
- If you want to switch between a bus pass or the \$52 transportation supplement, you need to tell the ministry by the fifth day of the month before. For example, if you get \$52 in March, you must tell the ministry by March 5 if you want a bus pass for April.

If you have the PWD designation but no longer qualify for disability assistance and have MSO (see page 28), you usually qualify for the monthly transportation supplement for the rest of the calendar year in which you stop getting monthly disability assistance.

Bus pass for seniors with low incomes

☛ *Who qualifies: IA, PPMB, spouse of someone with PWD designation, others listed here*

You may get a discounted **annual** (one year) bus pass if you're:

- 60 or over and get income assistance, PPMB benefits, disability assistance (because your spouse has the PWD designation), social assistance from a band, the Old Age Security Allowance for spouses 60 to 64, or Allowance for the Survivor;
- 65 or over and get the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS); or

- 65 or over and don't get GIS only because you haven't lived in Canada for 10 years.

If you're in one of these categories, you pay only \$45 each calendar year for the bus pass. You can't choose between the bus pass and the monthly transportation amount.

To get the annual bus pass, you must fill out an application form every year. You can fill out the form online.

To find the form online, go to **www2.gov.bc.ca**. In the search bar, type bus pass program. Click the link to open the page. Or phone the ministry at **1-866-866-0800**.

Transportation to alcohol and drug facilities

☞ **Who qualifies: IA, PWD, PPMB**

You may get this supplement to pay for transportation to and from an approved special care facility for residential alcohol and drug treatment in BC. The ministry may give you this supplement when you have no other way to get to the facility; for example, a family member or volunteer agency can't drive you and you can't pay for transportation. You must get the ministry to approve your request *before* you go.

There isn't an application form. Tell a ministry worker if you need this supplement. The ministry may check with the facility to make sure you're accepted for treatment.

Depending on what type of welfare you get, the ministry may pay your transportation cost to a medical clinic, hospital, doctor, nurse practitioner, or specialist you're referred to if you have no other way to get there. See page 45.

Basic medical coverage and health supplements

Everyone on welfare qualifies for **basic medical coverage** through the ministry. Basic medical coverage includes Medical Services Plan benefits and PharmaCare (see page 31). The ministry applies for you to get basic medical coverage.

You may also qualify for a wide range of **health supplements** through the ministry, depending on the type of welfare you're on. In this booklet, special diet allowances, general health supplements (including medical equipment and medical supplies), dental supplements, and optical supplements are included under health supplements.

The ministry doesn't automatically pay for most health supplements. You have to apply for almost all of them.

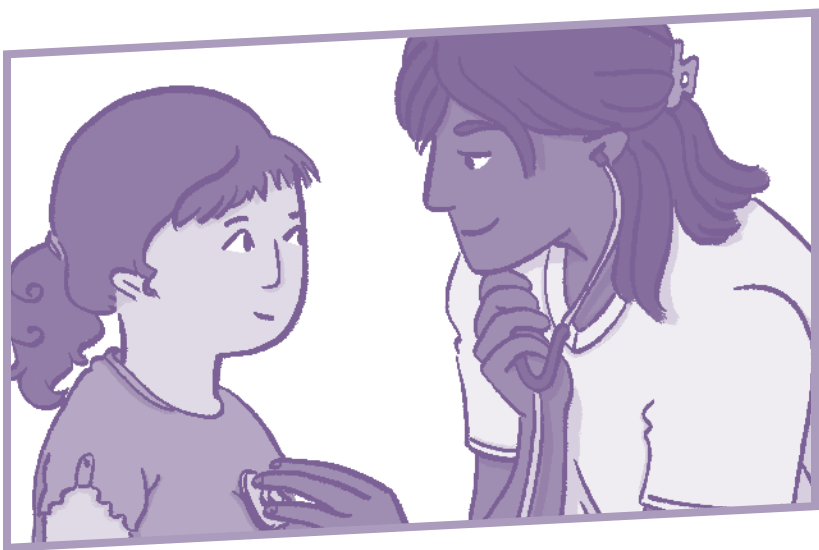
Keep the following in mind about health supplements:

- If you pay for a medical item before you get ministry approval, the ministry won't **reimburse** (pay you back) the cost.
- For some health supplements, you must ask your doctor, nurse practitioner, or another health professional for a medical note that says you need the supplement.
- For other health supplements, your doctor, nurse practitioner, or another health professional has to fill out all or part of a ministry application form for you. You get these forms from ministry offices (see page iv). The ministry mails you the forms if you can't pick them up.

- You give the ministry the medical note or completed ministry application form. Your local ministry office approves some health supplement requests, usually items under \$500. Your ministry office sends requests for other health supplements to the ministry's main office in Victoria for review. If your request goes to Victoria, you have to wait longer to hear if you qualify for the supplement.
- If you qualify for a health supplement (including dental and optical supplements), your spouse and dependent children usually also qualify for the supplement. There are some exceptions, such as some supplements only people with the PWD or PPMB designation can get. This booklet explains those on the next pages.

TIP: Some health care providers charge more than the ministry pays or don't agree to accept payment from the ministry. Check with health care providers before you get services to find out their payment policy and if there are additional fees.

If you don't get monthly welfare benefits, or don't qualify for general health supplements (see page 38), you may still qualify for certain health-related supplements under Medical Services Only (MSO) or for life-threatening needs (see pages 28 – 30).



Medical Services Only (MSO)

If you or another adult in your family unit has the PWD or PPMB designation and you stop getting these benefits for specific reasons, you and your dependants continue to qualify for Medical Services Only (MSO) from the ministry. MSO includes basic medical coverage, general health supplements, dental supplements, and optical supplements.

You can get MSO for these common reasons (the complete list is online — see page 29):

- You turned 65 on disability assistance and qualify for the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS).
- You turned 65 on PPMB benefits and qualify for GIS.
- You turned 65 in a special care facility, got monthly welfare benefits before you turned 65, and qualify for GIS.

- You or your spouse earn employment income above the disability assistance rate (plus earnings exemption) and qualify for Medical Services Plan (MSP) Premium Assistance (or, once you're over 65, qualify for GIS).
- While on disability assistance, you started to get Canada Pension Plan (CPP) disability benefits (or other payment from CPP) above the disability assistance rate, and qualify for MSP Premium Assistance (or, once you're over 65, qualify for GIS).
- You stop qualifying for disability assistance because of family maintenance income or financial assistance under the government's Agreements with Young Adults. In this case, you have MSO status for the length of your agreement.
- You got MSO before 2002.

You must live in BC to get MSO. If you move out of BC, your MSO benefits stop.

If you have MSO status and no longer meet the income test for it (for example, you no longer qualify for MSP Premium Assistance or for GIS), your MSO benefits continue for one more year.

If you get MSO, the ministry keeps a file open for you. They can ask you to show financial need if you apply for a health supplement.

To find the complete list online of who qualifies for MSO, go to **www2.gov.bc.ca**. In the search bar, type BCEA policy and procedure manual MSO. Click the link to open the page.

Health supplements for life-threatening needs

If you don't qualify for monthly welfare benefits, or if you're on income assistance or hardship assistance and don't qualify for general health supplements, the ministry may still pay for your:

- medical equipment and devices,
- medical and surgical supplies, and
- medical transportation.

To qualify, you must show that:

- a doctor or nurse practitioner says you have a “direct and imminent life-threatening need” for one of the supplements listed above,
- you have no other way to pay for it, and
- you get MSP Premium Assistance.

You must **meet the eligibility criteria** (qualify) for that supplement. You have to apply for the specific supplement you need.

If you're not on welfare, you need to start an application for welfare so the ministry can gather information about your financial situation before you apply for the health supplement. It can be difficult to qualify for these health supplements when you're not on welfare. Explain your situation to the ministry or get help from an advocate (see page 71).

Basic medical coverage

Medical Services Plan benefits

☞ **Who qualifies:** IA, PWD, PPMB, HA, MSO

The ministry pays your Medical Services Plan (MSP) premiums if you qualify for MSP benefits. You have to live in BC for three months before you can get MSP benefits.

PharmaCare

☞ **Who qualifies:** IA, PWD, PPMB, HA, MSO

PharmaCare pays for many prescription drugs and some medical supplies. The ministry applies for your PharmaCare coverage. But you have to call one of the numbers below to register.

604-683-7151 (Greater Vancouver)

1-800-663-7100 (elsewhere in BC)

Interim Federal Health program

If you're a Convention refugee or have applied for refugee status and you don't have MSP benefits or any other insurance, the Interim Federal Health program pays for your essential medical services for a short time. The program pays for emergency services, dental services, eyeglasses, immunizations, medical supplies, birth control, and prescription drugs. For more information, phone Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

1-888-242-2100

1-888-576-8502 (for hearing impaired)

Special diet allowances

Diet supplement

☛ **Who qualifies:** IA, PWD, PPMB

If you have a special diet need listed in one of the categories here, you may get a monthly diet supplement. You can get only one diet supplement at a time.

Diet	Monthly supplement
Restricted sodium	\$10
High-protein (see the note below)	\$40
Gluten-free	\$40
Ketogenic	\$40
Phenylalanine	\$40
Diabetes	\$35
Kidney dialysis (if Ministry of Health doesn't pay)	\$30
Dysphagia	\$40
Cystic fibrosis	\$50

You get the high-protein diet supplement only if you have one or more of the following medical conditions: chronic inflammatory bowel disease, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, HIV, AIDS, chronic bacterial infection, tuberculosis, hyperthyroidism, osteoporosis, or hepatitis B or hepatitis C; or if you're having cancer treatment.

There isn't an application form. To apply, ask your doctor, nurse practitioner, or registered dietitian for a medical note. The note must say:

- your medical condition,
- what specific diet you need, and
- how long you need to be on the specific diet.

You give the note to the ministry.

Monthly nutritional supplement

☛ **Who qualifies:** *PWD designation*

If you have a serious medical condition and need nutritional supplements to treat your symptoms, you may get up to \$205 a month. This supplement has two parts. The ministry may approve one or both parts.

- Nutritional items: \$165 a month
- Vitamin or mineral supplements: \$40 a month

You can't get the monthly nutritional supplement plus another diet supplement, such as the diet supplement for diabetes, at the same time.

To apply, ask the ministry for a Monthly Nutritional Supplement application form. Your doctor or nurse practitioner must fill out the form. On the form, your doctor or nurse practitioner must explain:

- you're being treated for a "chronic, progressive deterioration of health on account of a severe medical condition" and "as a direct result of this chronic, progressive deterioration of your health, you suffer from *two or more* of the following symptoms":
 - » malnutrition,
 - » underweight status,

- » significant weight loss,
- » significant loss of muscle mass,
- » significant neurological degeneration,
- » significant deterioration of a vital organ, and/or
- » moderate to severe immune suppression;
- you need vitamins and minerals and/or caloric supplements to your regular diet to **alleviate** (improve) *one or more* of the symptoms listed here (pages 33 – 34); and
- your life will be in “imminent danger” if you don’t get the supplement (this means you need the supplement to stop or slow down your serious health decline).

You return the completed form to the ministry.

TIP: Your doctor or nurse practitioner must make it clear on the form you need nutritional supplements to prevent or slow down your health problem. It’s not enough if they write that you need a special diet to improve your symptoms.

Short-term nutritional supplement

☛ **Who qualifies:** IA, PWD, PPMB

The ministry may pay for nutritional supplements, such as Boost or Ensure, for three months.

To qualify, you must have an **acute** (serious), short-term need for this caloric supplement to a regular diet to prevent critical weight loss while recovering from surgery, a severe injury, a serious disease, or the side effects of medical treatment.

If you get a short-term nutritional supplement, you can't get a monthly nutritional supplement at the same time.

There isn't an application form. To apply, ask your doctor or nurse practitioner for a medical note. The note must say:

- you need this supplement for the reasons listed here (page 34),
- the amount you need, and
- how long you need the supplement (up to three months).

You give the note to the ministry.

Natal supplement

☞ **Who qualifies: IA, PWD, PPMB**

If you're pregnant, you can apply for a natal supplement to help you meet extra costs. You may get the supplement from the start of your pregnancy to when your child is seven months old. The supplement is:

- \$45 a month if you're pregnant with one child
- \$90 a month if you're pregnant with more than one child

There isn't an application form. To apply, ask your doctor, nurse practitioner, or registered midwife for a letter.

- The letter must say you're pregnant and your expected delivery date.
- Or, if you've given birth, the letter must say the age of your child (the ministry can pay the supplement until your child is seven months old).

You give the letter to the ministry.

Infant formula

☛ *Who qualifies:* IA, PWD, PPMB, HA, MSO

The ministry may pay for regular infant formula for your child during the child's first 12 months if:

- there's a risk of disease from the mother's breast milk.

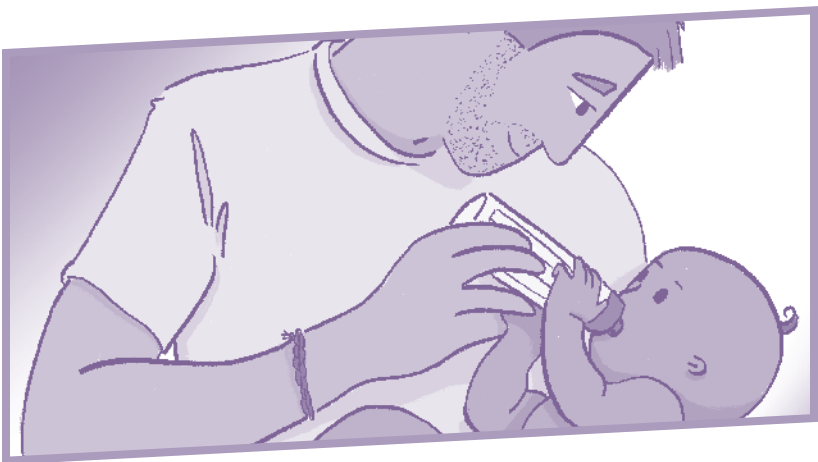
The ministry may pay for specialized infant formula if your child:

- has a medical condition and needs the special formula to treat that medical condition.

There isn't an application form. To apply, ask your doctor, nurse practitioner, or dietitian for a medical note. The note must say:

- what infant formula your child needs, and why your child needs it;
- the amount you need for your child; and
- how long you need the infant formula for your child.

You give the note to the ministry.



Tube feed supplement

 **Who qualifies:** IA, PWD, PPMB, MSO

If you need to get your primary nutrition through tube feeding, the ministry may pay for your liquid nutritional supplement and the equipment.

There isn't an application form. To apply, ask your doctor, nurse practitioner, or registered dietician for a medical note. The note must say:

- your medical condition,
- you need tube feeding,
- the kind and monthly amount of liquid nutrition you need, and
- how long you need the liquid nutrition.

You give the note to the ministry.

If you have MSO status, you only qualify for the tube feed supplement if you received the supplement before you had MSO status.

General health supplements

Medical equipment and devices

☛ **Who qualifies:** PWD, PPMB, MSO, people with a life-threatening health need, dependent children of IA and HA, youth under 19 on welfare

Before the ministry pays for any specific medical equipment or device:

- you must meet detailed eligibility criteria (qualify),
- you must show the ministry you have no other way to pay,
- the ministry must pre-authorize the equipment or device you ask for, and
- the equipment or device you ask for must be the “least expensive appropriate medical equipment or device.”

The ministry has spending limits on some equipment and devices. For example, they won’t pay more than \$3,500 for a regular mobility scooter.

They also set replacement time limits for many items. For example, they won’t replace a custom-made foot orthotic for at least three years. The ministry may pay for equipment repairs if the warranty has expired.



To get most medical equipment and devices, your doctor, nurse practitioner, and/or other health professional must **prescribe** it (say you need it). You may also need an **assessment** from a health professional. For example, an occupational therapist or physical therapist has to say you need a mobility device, or a respiratory therapist has to say you need a CPAP machine.






To apply for most equipment, you have to use an application form for items over \$500. For example, for medical equipment, you use a Medical Equipment Request and Justification form; for orthotics you use the Orthoses Request and Justification form.





The chart on pages 40 – 43 tells you when you have to use an application form. Your doctor, nurse practitioner, and/or other health professional must fill out the form.




You usually give the completed form to the ministry. To apply for a hearing aid, you give the form to Pacific Blue Cross (see page 47).





The chart here doesn't include all the items the ministry pays for. The chart also doesn't include all the requirements and time limits for each item. To find complete information online, go to www2.gov.bc.ca. In the search bar, type medical equipment and devices. Click the link to open the page.

Equipment or device	Requirement and how to apply	Replacement and \$ limit
canes, crutches, walkers (and accessories) 	<p>must be medically essential for basic mobility</p> <p>need an application form for items over \$500</p> <p>need a doctor's prescription or written assessment from an occupational therapist or physical therapist</p>	no limit
manual and power wheelchairs (and accessories) 	<p>must be medically essential for basic mobility</p> <p>need an application form for items over \$500</p> <p>usually need a written assessment by an occupational therapist or physical therapist</p>	every 5 years
wheelchair seating systems (and accessories) 	<p>must be medically essential for positioning in the wheelchair</p> <p>need an application form for items over \$500</p> <p>usually need a written assessment by an occupational therapist or physical therapist</p>	every 2 years

Equipment or device	Requirement and how to apply	Replacement and \$ limit
scooters (and accessories) 	<p>must be medically essential for basic mobility</p> <p>need an application form for items over \$500</p> <p>usually need a written assessment by an occupational therapist or physical therapist</p>	<p>\$3,500 for a regular scooter</p> <p>\$4,500 for a bariatric scooter</p>
bathroom grab bars, bath chairs, raised toilet seats and safety frames, portable commodes 	<p>must be medically essential for transferring or positioning</p> <p>need an application form for items over \$500</p> <p>usually need a written assessment by an occupational therapist or physical therapist</p>	<p>every 5 years</p>
hospital beds and related items 	<p>must be medically essential for transferring or positioning</p> <p>need an application form for items over \$500</p> <p>usually need a written assessment by an occupational therapist or physical therapist</p>	<p>every 5 years</p>
pressure relief mattresses 	<p>must be medically essential to prevent skin breakdown</p> <p>need an application form for items over \$500</p> <p>usually need a written assessment by an occupational therapist or physical therapist</p>	<p>every 5 years</p>

Equipment or device	Requirement and how to apply	Replacement and \$ limit
floor or ceiling lifts 	<p>must be medically essential for transfer in a bedroom or bathroom</p> <p>need an application form for items over \$500</p> <p>usually need a written assessment by an occupational therapist or physical therapist</p>	<p>every 5 years</p> <p>\$4,200 (more for unusual installation costs)</p>
hearing aids 	<p>an audiologist or hearing aid practitioner must apply for you (you don't apply)</p> <p>need a written assessment by an audiologist or hearing aid practitioner (they have the required forms to fill out and give to Pacific Blue Cross)</p>	<p>no limits</p>
positive airway pressure devices, such as CPAP machines (and accessories) 	<p>must be medically essential for treatment of moderate to severe sleep apnea</p> <p>need an application form</p> <p>need a written assessment by a respiratory therapist</p>	<p>every 5 years for devices</p> <p>every year for accessories</p>

Equipment or device	Requirement and how to apply	Replacement and \$ limit
<p>non-conventional glucose meters</p> 	<p>must be medically essential for monitoring blood glucose levels</p> <p>you can't manage a conventional meter</p> <p>need an application form for items over \$500</p> <p>may need a doctor's prescription or written assessment from an occupational therapist or physical therapist</p>	<p>every 5 years</p>
<p>wide range of orthotics, including custom and off-the-shelf foot orthotics, orthopaedic shoes, ankle braces, knee braces, back braces, cranial helmets</p> 	<p>must be medically essential for basic functionality</p> <p>needed to prevent surgery; for post-surgical care; to assist in physical healing from surgery, injury, or disease; or to improve physical functioning a neuro-musculo-skeletal condition has impaired</p> <p>need an application form for items over \$100 and all custom orthotics</p> <p>usually need a written assessment by an orthotist, podiatrist, or other health professional</p>	<p>once every 1 to 4 years, depending on the type of orthotic</p> <p>\$450 for custom foot orthotics</p> <p>\$1,650 for custom footwear</p>

Medical and surgical supplies

☛ **Who qualifies:** PWD, PPMB, MSO, *people with a life-threatening health need, dependent children of IA and HA, youth under 19 on welfare*

The ministry can pay for medical and surgical supplies if they're used only for these specific purposes:

- wound care
- ongoing bowel care due to loss of muscle function
- catheterization
- incontinence
- skin parasite care
- limb circulation care

The ministry can also pay for lancets, needles, syringes, ventilator supplies needed to use or clean a ventilator, tracheostomy supplies, and edible supplies that thicken food.

The supplies must be:

- disposable or reusable,
- used in a medical procedure or treatment,
- necessary to prevent you from becoming very ill (to avoid what the ministry calls an “imminent and substantial danger” to health), *and*
- the “least expensive supply appropriate for the purpose.”

Disposable medical and surgical supplies don't include prescription medicines, nutritional supplements, food, vitamins, or minerals. The ministry may consider bottled water a medical or surgical supply.

To qualify, you must show:

- you have no other way to pay for the supplies, and

- no one else pays for them; for example, the Ministry of Health.

There isn't an application form. To apply, ask your doctor or nurse practitioner for a medical note that says:

- your medical condition,
- a list of the supplies you need each month,
- why the supplies are medically necessary to avoid an imminent and substantial danger to your health,
- the amount of supplies you need each month, and
- how long you need the supplies.

You give the note to the ministry.

Sometimes the ministry asks you to get a **quote** (estimated price) from a supplier.

Medical transportation

☛ *Who qualifies: PWD, PPMB, MSO, people with a life-threatening health need, dependent children of IA and HA, youth under 19 on welfare*

The ministry may pay the cost of transportation to a medical clinic, hospital, or office of a doctor, nurse practitioner, or specialist you've been referred to if you have no other way to get to a medical appointment. The ministry first asks you to check other ways you can get to your appointment; for example, a ride from your family.

- The ministry pays for the least expensive suitable transportation.
- The ministry has to approve payment for medical transportation before your appointment.

- If you don't live where the only medical treatment is available, the ministry may pay your medical transportation, meals, and accommodation.

To apply for local medical transportation, ask your doctor or nurse practitioner for a medical note that says you have an upcoming appointment, or appointments.

If you have to travel outside your local area, you and your doctor have to fill out an application form. Ask a ministry worker which application form you have to fill out. There's more than one form.

Extended medical therapies

☛ **Who qualifies:** PWD, PPMB, MSO, *dependent children of IA and HA, youth under 19 on welfare*

The ministry may pay \$23 a visit for the following registered services:

- acupuncture
- naturopathy
- chiropractic
- physiotherapy
- massage therapy
- podiatry

The ministry pays for only 12 extra visits a year to all therapists combined, no matter how many you see.

To qualify, you must:

- have used up the 10 visits allowed under MSP (MSP pays \$23 for your first 10 visits), and
- show you can't get the money or therapy anywhere else.

To apply, ask your doctor or nurse practitioner and therapist for a medical note, or notes, that say:

- your medical condition,

- why you have an “acute need” for more therapy,
- your therapist’s name, and
- how many more therapy visits you need until the end of the year.

Your give the note or notes to the ministry.

TIP: Most therapists charge user fees on top of the payment they get from the ministry or MSP. User fees vary, so ask several therapists about how much they charge before you go to one.

Other health supplements

Alternative hearing supplement

 **Who qualifies:** IA, PWD, PPMB, MSO, dependent children of IA and HA, youth under 19 on welfare

If you have permanent, profound hearing loss in both ears and a hearing instrument doesn’t help you to understand speech, the ministry may pay \$100 a month for your special needs. This is meant to help pay for your communications needs (for example, the Internet, phone for texting, etc.).

To apply, ask your audiologist or hearing aid practitioner. The hearing professional must:

- assess a profound hearing loss in both of your ears (the ministry says this means “a hearing loss of 91 decibels or more across all frequencies”); and
- apply for you to Pacific Blue Cross, a private insurance company the ministry contracts.

Pacific Blue Cross decides if you qualify for the supplement. They send you their decision in writing by mail. You have the right to apply to the ministry for reconsideration and appeal of Pacific Blue Cross decisions about this supplement (see page 69).

Supplement for alcohol and drug treatment

☞ *Who qualifies: IA, PWD, PPMB, dependent children of IA, PWD, PPMB*

If you have a drug or alcohol problem, the ministry may pay up to \$500 in a 12-month period to cover treatment, counselling, or related services. In most cases, they pay the service agency directly.

You have to show:

- you need the treatment, counselling, or other service; and
- you have no other way to pay for it.

You must get the ministry to approve your request *before* you go.

There isn't an application form. To apply, tell a ministry worker you want to go to treatment, counselling, or a related service. Give them any letters or other paperwork to show you need the service.

Dental supplements



Pacific Blue Cross administers the ministry's dental program. Costs for dental services are based on a Schedule of Fee allowances. The schedule lists the dental procedures the ministry pays for and how much they pay.

Your dentist deals directly with Pacific Blue Cross to get payment. Dentists often charge extra fees because the ministry rates are low. If you need dental services, ask your dentist how much you have to pay. You have the right to apply to the ministry for reconsideration and appeal of Pacific Blue Cross decisions about dental supplements (see page 69).

Basic dental services

☛ **Who qualifies:** PWD, PPMB, MSO; *dependent children of IA and HA; youth under 19 on welfare*

The table here shows who qualifies for basic dental services and the maximum (highest) amount the ministry pays for basic services over a certain time.

Who qualifies	Maximum amount	Time
Adult or spouse on PWD	\$1,000	Over 2 calendar years
Adult or spouse on PPMB	\$1,000	Over 2 calendar years
Adult on MSO	\$1,000	Over 2 calendar years
Dependent child of parent on IA, PWD, PPMB, HA, or MSO, youth under 19 on welfare	\$2,000	Over 2 calendar years

The two-year period begins on January 1 of every odd-numbered year; for example, 2017, 2019, 2021, etc.

- If you need dentures, the ministry may pay more than \$1,000.
- If your child needs dental treatment under general anaesthetic in the hospital, or in a private facility on the ministry's approved list, the ministry may pay an extra \$1,000.
- When you reach your maximum amount and need emergency dental services to relieve pain, the ministry may pay.
- In special circumstances, the ministry may pay for general anaesthetic and intravenous sedation in your doctor's office.

Ask your dentist to apply for you. Your dentist sends your treatment plan to Pacific Blue Cross for approval and payment.

Emergency dental services

☞ **Who qualifies:** **IA, PWD, PPMB, HA, MSO, youth under 19 on welfare**

The ministry may pay for emergency dental services for the immediate relief of pain, or to control infection, bleeding, or other serious health problems. For example, if you have **acute** (serious) pain and need your tooth pulled, the ministry may pay for the urgent treatment.

To qualify, you have to be on:

- income assistance or hardship assistance, and not have dental coverage; or
- disability assistance, PPMB benefits, or MSO, and have reached your maximum amount for basic dental services.

Ask your dentist to apply for you. Your dentist sends your treatment plan to Pacific Blue Cross for approval and payment.

Crown and bridgework supplement

☞ **Who qualifies:** **PWD designation, PPMB designation, MSO if had PWD designation or PPMB designation before (not dependants)**

The ministry doesn't pay for crowns as part of basic dental services. But you can ask for a crown and bridgework supplement if:

- basic dental services can't correct your dental condition, and
- your dentist says you can't use removable dental aids, such as dentures or a bridge, for major health reasons.

Ask your dentist to apply for you. Your dentist sends a request to Pacific Blue Cross. The request must say why basic dental services can't correct your dental condition and why you can't use a removable denture or bridge.

Pacific Blue Cross must approve your request before the dental work starts.

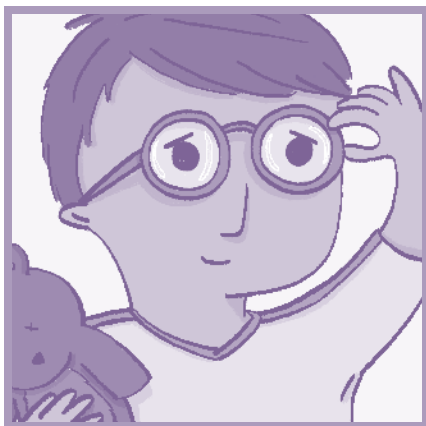
Orthodontic services

☛ *Who qualifies: PWD designation; MSO if had PWD designation before; dependent children of IA, PWD, PPMB, and MSO if had PWD designation before, youth under 19 on welfare*

The ministry pays for orthodontic services if:

- you or your children have a serious problem with the way teeth fit together (an orthodontist looks for “jaw misalignment of two or more standard deviations”),
- you get approval before treatment starts, and
- you have no other way to pay for the treatment.

Ask your orthodontist to apply for you. Your orthodontist sends a request to Pacific Blue Cross. The request must say how your dental problem fits ministry requirements.



Optical supplements

Pacific Blue Cross administers the ministry's optical program and makes all decisions about payments, including for pre-authorized services. You have the right to apply to the ministry

for reconsideration and appeal of Pacific Blue Cross decisions about optical supplements (see page 69).

Eye exams

☞ **Who qualifies: IA, PWD, PPMB, HA, MSO**

If you're an adult in one of the above categories and don't qualify for MSP to pay for an eye exam, then the ministry pays once every 24 months:

- \$44.83 for an optometrist's exam
- \$48.90 for an ophthalmologist's exam

MSP pays for one routine eye exam a year for children under 19 and for seniors 65 and over.

MSP also pays for medically necessary eye exams for everyone (all ages) registered with MSP.

To get your eye exam paid, show your CareCard or BC Services Card to your optometrist or ophthalmologist.

Basic eyewear

☛ *Who qualifies:* IA, PWD, PPMB, HA, MSO

Basic eyewear means:

- Adults may get one pair of single-vision or bifocal glasses every three years with a prescription.
- Dependent children may get one pair of single-vision or bifocal glasses once a year with a prescription.
- Repairs are covered and replacement lenses may be approved at any time if your prescription changes.

To get basic eyewear paid, you can go to the optical supplier of your choice — including an online supplier — and show your CareCard or BC Services Card. The supplier contacts Pacific Blue Cross for all necessary approvals.

Pre-authorized eyewear

☛ *Who qualifies:* IA, PWD, PPMB, HA, MSO

- If you have a medical need for specialized eyewear, such as tinted lenses or contact lenses or specialized frames, you may get these items approved as pre-authorized eyewear.
- You can also ask your eye professional to request pre-authorization if you need new eyewear outside the time limits the ministry sets; for example, if you lost your glasses, or someone stole them.

Ask your optometrist or ophthalmologist to apply for you. They send a request for your specialized eyewear to Pacific Blue Cross for approval.

Supplements for families with children



Camp fees supplement

☛ **Who qualifies:** PWD; dependent children of IA, PWD, PPMB

You can apply to get camp fees paid once a year for you or your children to go to day camp or overnight camp.

- The ministry budget is limited for this supplement.
- Children are the priority. Everyone who applies may not get the supplement.

There isn't an application form. To apply, tell a ministry worker the camp you want your children or you to go to.

Child Benefit Top-up supplement

☛ **Who qualifies:** IA, PWD, PPMB, HA

If you have dependent children aged two months to 18 years in your family unit, you should get a monthly payment called the Canada Child Benefit.

If you're not getting this federal government benefit for one or more months for all your children, you:

- may not have applied for the Canada Child Benefit, or
- didn't file last year's income tax return on time.

If you don't get the Canada Child Benefit for all your children for one month or more, or your Canada Child Benefit is below a certain amount (see below), you can ask the ministry to pay you a supplement.

To qualify, you must apply for the Canada Child Benefit, if you haven't already, and file your income tax return for last year. If you get some Canada Child Benefit, the ministry subtracts that amount from the supplement.

Maximum BC Child Benefit Top-up supplement

1 child	\$195.02 a month
2 children	\$367.56 a month
After 2 children	\$164.18 a month for each child

The supplement amount is indexed with inflation.

This means it goes up slightly every year on July 1.

There isn't an application form. To apply, contact the ministry right away. Tell them you're not getting the Canada Child Benefit, or if you're not getting the full amount to cover changes in your family (such as more children in your family).

Ask the ministry to pay you the Canada Child Benefit Top-up until you get the Canada Child Benefit payment. If you don't ask the ministry for the top-up, your monthly income will be less than it should be.

TIP: Tell the ministry right away if you have a new baby, or if one of your dependent children is turning 18. The Canada Child Benefit isn't paid for children under two months or after their 18th birthday. The ministry increases the support rate for your family unit by the amount of the Child Benefit Top-up supplement for the first two months of a child's life, and for dependent children 18 to 19. If your dependent child turns 19 while going to high school, you get the increased support rate for them until the end of the school year, if they stay in school.

Court-related costs: Child protection hearing

☞ **Who qualifies:** IA, PWD, PPMB, HA

- If you're involved in a child protection case with the Ministry of Child and Family Development and have to travel to court hearings, the ministry may pay your transportation costs.
- If you have to go to court away from your home and stay in a hotel, the ministry may also pay your living costs.

You have to get ministry approval to get the supplement.

There isn't an application form. To apply, tell a ministry worker when and where your court hearing is.

Court-related costs: Family maintenance court action

☞ *Who qualifies:* IA, PWD, PPMB, HA

The ministry may pay transportation costs, living costs, and child care costs if:

- the ministry is helping you get a court order or agreement for child support or spousal support and you need to travel to a court hearing, or
- you or your child needs to travel out of town for DNA (paternity) testing.

The ministry only pays if you can't pay any other way.

You have to get ministry approval first to get the supplement.

There isn't an application form. To apply, tell a ministry worker about your upcoming court hearing or your need for DNA testing.

School start-up supplement

☞ *Who qualifies:* IA, PWD, PPMB, HA

If you have school-aged dependent children, you may get the school start-up supplement:

- \$100 for every child age 5 to 11
- \$175 for every child age 12 and older (until they turn 19)

The money helps cover expenses for your child to start or return to school in September.

The child in your care must:

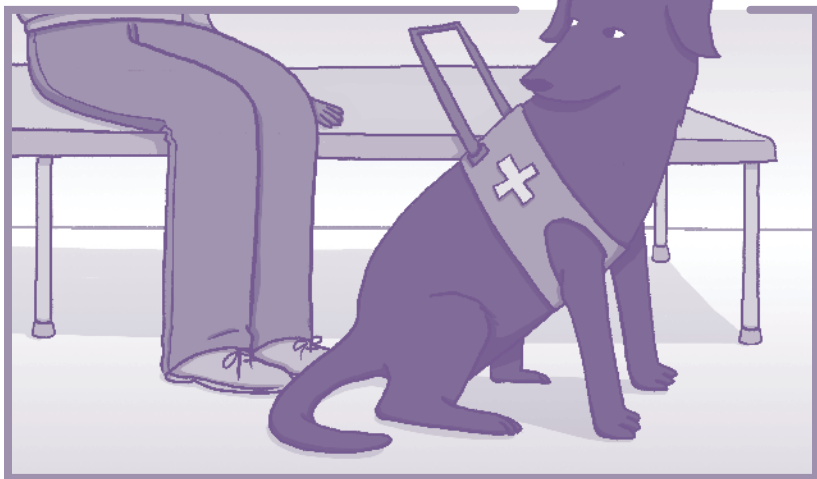
- go to school full-time, or to full-time kindergarten, even if it's less than a full day;
- be in a home-school program the Ministry of Education recognizes; or
- go to an alternative school program the Ministry of Education recognizes.

If your child takes less than a full course load for health reasons or other good reasons, you may still get the school start-up supplement.

You don't have to apply for this supplement. The ministry usually adds the supplement to welfare cheques in late July (to cover August expenses). If your child starts or returns to school later in the school year, the ministry may add the supplement at that time.



Other supplements



Guide dog and service dog supplement

☛ *Who qualifies:* IA, PWD, PPMB, HA

If you have a guide dog or service dog (can be a retired guide dog or retired service dog), you may get \$95 a month to help cover the cost of caring for your dog. Your dog has to be certified under the Guide Dog and Service Dog Act.

There isn't an application form. To apply, tell a ministry worker you have a guide dog or service dog. The ministry checks whether your dog is registered under the Guide Dog and Service Dog Act.

Christmas supplement

☞ *Who qualifies: IA, PWD, PPMB*

This supplement gives you a little more money before Christmas:

- \$35 for a single person
- \$70 for a couple
- \$70 for a family, plus \$10 for each dependent child in your family

You don't have to apply for this supplement. The ministry adds the supplement to welfare cheques in late November (to pay December's expenses).

Clothing supplement for people on a comforts allowance

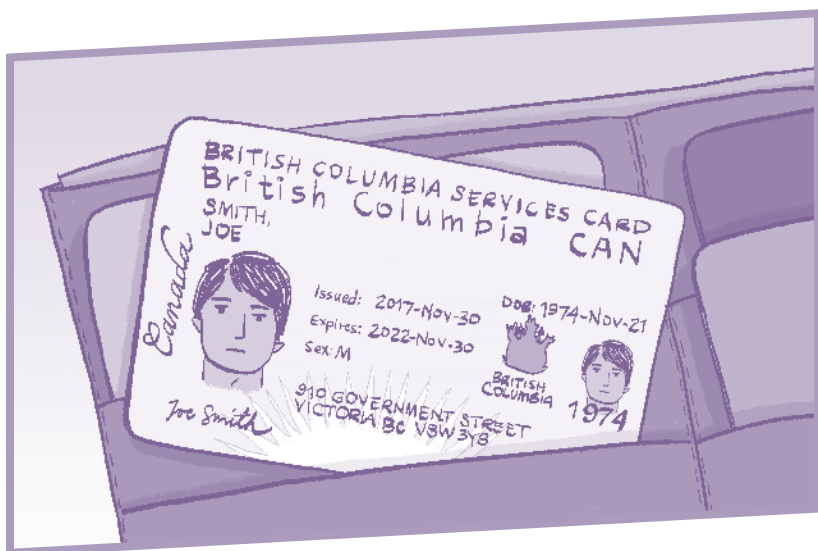
☞ *Who qualifies: anyone getting a comforts allowance*

If you get a comforts allowance because you live in a special care facility or a private hospital, or get extended care in a hospital, you may also qualify for a clothing supplement. See page 10 for the comforts allowance.

If the place where you live doesn't give you clothes and you don't have any other way to pay for them, the ministry may pay you up to \$250 every 12 months to buy clothes.

There isn't an application form. To apply, tell a ministry worker you need new clothing, and why. To support your request, you can give a list to the ministry of the clothing you need.

TIP: If you get a comforts allowance, you also qualify for crisis supplements (see page 20).



Identification supplement

☛ Who qualifies: HA

If you need identification (such as photo ID or a birth certificate) to qualify for income assistance or disability assistance and you don't have it, the ministry may pay for your ID. The ministry may also pay for your lost or stolen ID. You may get hardship assistance until you get the new ID. You can then apply for income assistance or disability assistance.

If the ministry has a copy on file of your lost or stolen ID, they use the copy instead of paying for new ID.

If you don't have ID, ask a ministry worker about this supplement when you apply for welfare.

Funeral costs

 **Who qualifies:** IA, PWD, PPMB, HA, BC residents with low income

If a person dies in BC and doesn't leave enough money to pay for their funeral costs, and the person's spouse (or parents if their child dies) also can't pay for funeral costs, the ministry may pay a supplement to transport and bury or cremate them. The person who died didn't have to be on welfare. The ministry may ask the deceased person's estate to pay back this supplement.

There isn't an application form. To apply, the person's executor or closest relative tells a ministry worker about the person's death and need for financial help. The ministry looks at the person's finances to decide if the ministry will pay this supplement.

Employment-related supplements

If you're expected to look for work while you're on welfare, the ministry can refer you to their Employment Program of BC. WorkBC delivers this program and offers a range of employment services and some financial support (money).

If you're on welfare but don't have to look for work, you can apply for employment services by going to a WorkBC Employment Services Centre.

To find the WorkBC Employment Services Centre in your area, go to **work.bc.ca**. Click Find a WorkBC Centre in the top menu. Or phone **1-877-952-6914**.

Confirmed job supplement

☛ *Who qualifies:* **IA, PWD, PPMB, HA**

If you're offered a job while you're on welfare, the ministry may pay you up to \$1,000 for tools, clothes, transportation, and other employment-related expenses so you can start your job.

Usually, you can get this supplement only once. In some situations, you may get it more than once; for example, if you're a seasonal worker.

There isn't an application form. To apply, tell a ministry worker if you got a job offer but you can't start work without some financial help.

The ministry will ask you for information about your job offer and job-related expenses.

See page 19 for the supplement the ministry may pay for your moving costs to a confirmed job.

Employment plan supplements

☛ **Who qualifies:** IA, PWD, PPMB, HA

If someone in your family unit has a ministry employment plan and needs financial help to go to an employment or training program their employment plan says they have to attend, the ministry may pay:

- up to \$100 a month to help with costs for transportation to and attendance at the program;
- for tuition, books, and supplies you need for the program; and
- up to \$200 for safety clothing you need for a work experience or workplace training program.

If your employment plan says you have to attend a volunteer incentive program, the ministry may pay up to \$100 a month to help you participate in the program. This supplement can be paid for only 12 months in a 36-month period.

There isn't an application form. To apply, tell a ministry worker about the program you want to attend. It must be an employment or training program the ministry approves.

Child care subsidy

☛ *Who qualifies: IA, PWD, PPMB, HA, BC residents with low income*

The Ministry of Children and Family Development may pay the child care subsidy if you care for your own child or a foster child, and you either:

- work and earn a low income (includes self-employment),
- are looking for work,
- attend school (includes distance education) or a work training program,
- have a child in a licensed preschool,
- have been referred for child care by a social worker with the Ministry of Children and Family Development or a delegated Aboriginal agency, or
- have a medical condition that makes it difficult for you to care for your child.

If you're in a two-parent family, both you and your spouse must fit into one of the above categories to get the child care subsidy. You may also qualify if your child has special needs. If you're a sponsored immigrant, your sponsor may have to pay back the child care subsidy.

The child care subsidy pays up to \$750 a child a month, depending on your income and:

- your child's age,
- the type of child care needed, and
- the hours of child care needed a day.

If you have a child with special needs, you may qualify for up to \$150 more a month.

To apply, fill out a Child Care Subsidy Application form. You can ask a ministry worker for the form, or get it online.

TIP: The ministry will improve the child care subsidy in April 2018 and September 2018. More families should qualify for larger subsidies.

To find more information about the subsidy and for the online application form, go to **www2.gov.bc.ca**. In the search bar, type child care subsidy. Click the link to open the page.

Single parent employment initiative

 **Who qualifies: Single parents on IA, PWD, PPMB**

If you're a single parent and have received monthly benefits for at least three months, you may qualify for training and support to help you get long-term employment. The single parent employment initiative can include:

- up to 12 months of funded training or paid work experience. Your welfare benefits continue during this time. Transportation costs for school or work may also be paid.
- child care costs during training or paid work experience. If you get a job, child care costs can be paid for your first year of work.
- help from WorkBC Employment Services Centres, including help with resumés and for job interviews.
- one year of health supplements (including dental, optical, MSP, and PharmaCare) if you get a job and stop getting welfare benefits.

There isn't an application form. To apply, contact a WorkBC Employment Services Centre (see page 64), or talk to a ministry worker.

Transitional health services

Who qualifies: IA or PPMB with children

- If you have children and go off income assistance or PPMB benefits because you get employment income, you still qualify for certain health supplements for a year. This includes MSP and PharmaCare, dental and optical services, medical supplies and transportation, and other health supplements. You can find the list online (see below).
- If you leave disability assistance because you get employment income, you keep Medical Services Only (MSO) status. See page 28 for MSO.

You don't have to apply. When you start working, you must report your employment income to the ministry. Based on those reports, the ministry starts transitional health services two months after you go off welfare.

To find the list online of health supplements you may qualify for under transitional health services, go to **www2.gov.bc.ca**. In the search bar, type transitional health services. Click the link to open the page.

Your Right to Reconsideration and Appeal

The ministry may decide to refuse, reduce, or stop your monthly welfare benefits or a supplement. Or they may decide to refuse the PWD or PPMB designation. You have the right to challenge their decision. A challenge of a ministry decision has two steps:

1. A **reconsideration** is an internal review by ministry staff.
2. An **appeal** is made to the Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal.

Reconsideration

As soon as you find out the ministry made a decision you don't agree with:

- Ask the ministry to give you their decision and the reasons for their decision in writing. Also ask for copies of everything they used to make the decision. You have a right to this information.
- Find an advocate (see page 71). An advocate can tell you if your reconsideration might succeed. They can also help you do the Request for Reconsideration paperwork.
- Attach all the information and evidence that support your request to the Request for Reconsideration form. *It's important to give as much information and evidence as you can.*

- The deadline to file a Request for Reconsideration is *20 business days* (weekends and statutory holidays don't count) from the day the ministry gave you their decision. *You must meet this deadline.*
- If you need more time to give the ministry *other* documents and evidence, such as records or letters that support your request, you can ask the ministry for 10 to 20 extra business days to give them more evidence. If you need more time, write that on the Request for Reconsideration form when you give it to the ministry.
- You can also get and fill out the form through your My Self Serve account.

Appeal

When the ministry decides about your Request for Reconsideration, they send you a Reconsideration Decision. They also send you a Notice to Appeal form at the same time.

- If you don't agree with the ministry's Reconsideration Decision, you can usually appeal it to the Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal.
- You must file an appeal within *seven business days* (weekends and statutory holidays don't count) of the day you get the Reconsideration Decision.

It's a good idea to get an advocate to help you with appeals to the Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal. See page 71 for where to find an advocate.

For more information about appeals, see Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal BC at eaat.ca.

Who Can Help

Advocates

Advocates are community workers trained to help people. These organizations have advocates or can help you find an advocate experienced in welfare problems.

Disability Alliance BC (DABC)

disabilityalliancebc.org

604-872-1278 (Greater Vancouver)

1-800-663-1278 (elsewhere in BC)

DABC offers information, advice, and one-to-one help for people with disabilities. They help people with disabilities get government benefits, such as the PWD and PPMB designation. They also help people with disabilities who have problems with these benefits.

PovNet

povnet.org

PovNet is a website with information about poverty issues that includes a *Find an Advocate* map of advocacy groups throughout BC. Search the map to find an advocate near you to help with welfare problems.

BC211

bc211.ca

Phone **211**

(Greater Vancouver, Fraser Valley,
Squamish-Lillooet, Sunshine Coast;
24 hours a day, seven days a week)

Text **211**

(text your city's name to start a
chat session)

TTY **604-875-0885**

(for hearing impaired)

BC211 is an information and referral service. When you phone 211, the person you speak to tells you about services in your community that can help you. Your call is kept private and confidential.

When you want to make a complaint

Ministry supervisor

A supervisor is in charge of each ministry office. Ministry workers report to this person. The supervisor handles complaints about their office.

MLA (Members of the Legislative Assembly)

leg.bc.ca (under Members, click Members)

1-800-661-8683

MLAs are the elected members of the BC provincial government. To find your local representative, see the website, or call Elections BC at the above number.

Ombudsperson

bcombudsperson.ca

250-387-5855 (Victoria)

1-800-567-3247 (elsewhere in BC)

Office address: Second Floor, 947 Fort Street
Victoria, BC

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Monday to Friday

Mailing address: PO Box 9039, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9A5

Contact the Ombudsperson if you have questions or complaints about government services or agencies. They're neutral and don't work for any agency you might complain about. The information you give is confidential. Their website has a complaint form you can fill out and send to them.

Legal help

The following organizations give free legal help.

Access Pro Bono Society of British Columbia

accessprobono.ca

604-878-7400 (Greater Vancouver)

1-877-762-6664 (elsewhere in BC)

Access Pro Bono gives free legal advice to people who can't afford a lawyer. You can meet with a lawyer for free for half an hour at legal clinics around BC.

BC Public Interest Advocacy Centre (BC PIAC)

bcpiac.com

604-687-3063

BC PIAC is a non-profit organization with lawyers who work on consumer and social justice issues. They deal with issues that affect people's access to welfare, including helping people make a complaint to the Ombudsperson.

Community Legal Assistance Society (CLAS)

www.clasbc.net

604-685-3425 (Greater Vancouver)

1-888-685-6222 (elsewhere in BC)

CLAS offers free legal advice, help, and representation to people with low incomes and the groups who represent them. CLAS may be able to help if you have lost an appeal to the Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal.

The Law Centre, Victoria

thelawcentre.ca

250-385-1221

University of Victoria law students at The Law Centre give free legal advice at clinics in Victoria.

(LSS) Legal Aid BC

legalaid.bc.ca

604-408-2172 (Greater Vancouver)

1-866-577-2525 (elsewhere in BC)

Legal Aid BC gives legal help to people with low incomes who are dealing with certain criminal, family, and immigration problems. It doesn't provide legal representation (a lawyer) to help people with welfare problems. But it does give free legal information and publications at many legal aid offices and online.

TRU Community Legal Clinic, Kamloops

tru.ca/law/students/outreach.html

(click Legal Clinic)

778-471-8490

Law students at TRU give legal help and advice in a range of areas, including about welfare.

UBC Law Students' Legal Advice Program

lslap.bc.ca

604-822-5791

Law students at UBC run free legal advice clinics throughout Greater Vancouver.

Free legal information

Clicklaw

clicklaw.bc.ca

The Clicklaw website has links to legal information, education, and help for British Columbians. You can find out about your rights and options to solve legal problems, and find phone numbers for legal help.

Disability Alliance BC (DABC)

disabilityalliancebc.org

604-872-1278 (Greater Vancouver)

1-800-663-1278 (elsewhere in BC)

DABC publishes a free series of self-help guides that help people learn about and access BC's disability benefits and programs. Guides include help sheets about the PWD and PPMB application; denial of the PWD and PPMB designations; and employment, education, and training for people with disabilities. Contact them to get free copies or download the help sheets from their website.

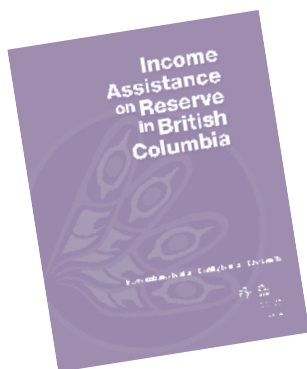
Family Law in BC and MyLawBC

familylaw.lss.bc.ca

mylawbc.com

These LSS websites have lots of information about family law, including how to do your own divorce, make a separation agreement or a will, and much more.

Other free Legal Aid BC publications with information about welfare



*Income Assistance
on Reserve in
British Columbia*

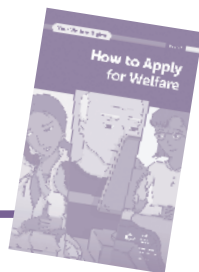
Sponsorship Breakdown

Available in English,
simplified and
traditional Chinese,
Punjabi, and Spanish.

Coming soon in Arabic,
Farsi, and French.



Welfare Benefits is the second
booklet in the series *Your Welfare
Rights*. *How to Apply for Welfare* is
the first booklet in this series.



How to get this and other free Legal Aid BC publications

Read: legalaidsbc.ca/read

Order: crownpub.bc.ca

(under Quick Links, click BC Public
Legal Education & Information)

Questions about ordering?

604-601-6000

distribution@lss.bc.ca

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