



## Your Welfare Rights — September 2019 Update

If you have any of the booklets in the series Your Welfare Rights, this fact sheet will help you with some general information about:

- changes the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (the ministry) made to welfare rules since the booklets were published
- changes to welfare rules the ministry has announced but aren't in effect yet

To check for the most recent updates, phone the ministry: **1-866-866-0800**

Or go to the **ministry website**. Click the link to the **BC Employment Assistance Policy and Procedure Manual** to read the most recent updates.

Go to **[www2.gov.bc.ca](http://www2.gov.bc.ca)** and in the search bar, type Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. On the page that opens with the list of links, click **Ministry of Social Development & Poverty Reduction — Province of British Columbia**. Then click **BC Employment Assistance Policy and Procedure Manual**.

Or type **[www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual)**

## Welfare changes in effect now

### Reduced work search period

If you apply for welfare for the first time, you now have to actively look for work for three weeks instead of five weeks. If the ministry says you don't have to search for work because of your circumstances, this change won't affect you.

See page 33 in *How to Apply for Welfare* for more information about work searches.

## Increase in welfare support rates

Income assistance, disability assistance (PWD), Person with Persistent Multiple Barriers (PPMB) benefits, and hardship assistance support rates increased by \$50 for a single person or single-parent family, and \$100 for a couple or two-parent family.

### Sample of new monthly rates (maximum shelter and support)

	Income assistance	PWD	PPMB
Single person under 65	\$760.00	\$1,183.42	\$807.92

[Go to the rate tables on the ministry website \(see page 1\) for more details.](#)

## Increase in the room and board rate if you live with a family member

Before the ministry changed this rule, if you were living with a parent or adult child and paid them room and board, the ministry paid you only monthly support benefits — you didn't get shelter (housing) benefits. Now, the ministry pays up to the maximum shelter and support amount, as in any other room and board situation. This usually means the ministry pays your family member the room and board amount, and you and your spouse (if you live together) each get \$60 a month, and your dependent children each get \$40 a month.

## Increase in the non-exempt asset limit for income assistance and PPMB benefits

Single person under 65	Asset limit was \$2,000	Asset limit is now \$5,000
Family unit of two or more	Asset limit was \$4,000	Asset limit is now \$10,000

[See page 20 in \*How to Apply for Welfare\* for more information about asset rules.](#)

## Increase in the asset exemption for vehicles

The \$10,000 limit on the value of a car you own and use for daily transportation no longer applies. Now the value of your car doesn't affect whether you qualify for welfare.

## Changes to the moving supplement

You can now get help with moving costs for a move anywhere in BC, instead of just in a municipality or to a neighbouring municipality. Also, you can get the moving supplement if you're forced to leave your rented home for more reasons than before. Generally, you must ask the ministry to pay for your moving costs before you move. But now you can get help with moving costs after you move if the ministry agrees your circumstances meant you couldn't get pre-approval; for example, if your family left an abusive situation and had to move quickly, or the ministry couldn't pre-approve your expenses in time for your move date.

## Changes to criteria (how you qualify) for the PPMB designation

The following changes have been made to how you qualify for the PPMB designation:

- You no longer have to be on welfare for 12 months before you apply for the PPMB designation. You can now apply for the PPMB designation at any time.
- If you have an addiction, your addiction now counts as a health condition.
- Your health condition must *seriously impede* your ability to search for, accept, or continue in employment. Seriously impede means your health condition stops you from working in any job that would allow you to get off welfare.
- You must also have at least one additional barrier from the following list:
  - experience family violence or have experienced family violence in the past six months
  - are homeless or have been homeless in the past 12 months
  - have less than a Grade 12 education
  - need English language skills training
  - don't have basic skills for employment
  - have a criminal record
  - have used emergency health services, mental health service, or addiction services multiple times in the past 12 months
  - are a recent Convention refugee (in the last 24 months) or a refugee claimant
  - are a former child in care (Ministry of Children and Family Development or similar Canadian jurisdiction)
  - have other severe barriers to employment listed on your application

One of these professionals can now fill out your PPMB application form:

- ◆ medical practitioner
- ◆ nurse practitioner
- ◆ registered nurse
- ◆ registered psychiatric nurse
- ◆ chiropractor
- ◆ occupational therapist
- ◆ registered social worker
- ◆ physical therapist
- ◆ registered psychologist
- ◆ school psychologist
- ◆ registered clinical counsellor

See pages 12 and 46 in *How to Apply for Welfare* for more information about how to apply for the PPMB designation and PPMB benefits.

## Change to get special diet allowances

A registered dietitian can now help you apply for all diet supplements, short-term nutritional supplements, and infant formula. They can also fill out the Monthly Nutritional Supplement Application form for you.

See page 32 in *Welfare Benefits* for more information about special diet allowances.

## Changes to who can get the identification (ID) supplement

Before the ministry changed this rule, they only paid for ID documents if you got hardship assistance and needed specific ID to qualify for income assistance. Now, you can also qualify for the ID supplement if you get any type of welfare, and you, your spouse, or your dependent children need ID to get other important services, such as a bank account or BC Services card, to apply for jobs or school, or participate in community activities.

## Welfare changes to come

### Changes 2019 – 2020

The ministry has announced they plan to make the following changes by the end of 2019, but they might not be in effect until 2020:

- get rid of the two-year financial independence test
- change the definition of spouse
- end the requirement to apply for Canada Pension Plan early retirement benefits
- improve supplements for people who get hardship assistance
- remove the limit on security deposits and introduce a pet damage deposit
- increase crisis supplements for housing-related costs

Check the [ministry website](#), or phone the ministry for more information. See page 1 for contact information.

## Who can help

### Advocates

Advocates are community workers trained to help people. For more information about changes to welfare, contact an advocate in your community. These organizations can help you find an advocate experienced in welfare issues:

#### **Disability Alliance BC (DABC)**

[Disabilityalliancebc.org](http://Disabilityalliancebc.org)

**604-872-1278** (Greater Vancouver)

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

DABC offers support, information, and one-to-one assistance for people with disabilities.

#### **PovNet**

[povnet.org](http://povnet.org)

PovNet is a website with information about poverty issues that includes a [Find an Advocate](#) directory of advocacy groups throughout BC.