

Chapter 10

Do not use this guide for legal advice. It provides information only, and that information only applies to British Columbia law, services, and benefits. Consult with a lawyer for advice related to your specific situation. Laws, benefits, policies, and procedures are always changing. Always double-check the information you intend to rely on with the appropriate agency or with your lawyer. Indigenous people's traditions and customary laws are outside the scope of this guide; however, we want to acknowledge those customs and traditions and emphasize that nothing in this guide should be misinterpreted as superseding or taking away from them.

Financial assistance and benefits

Parts of this section were taken from the Family Law in BC Website, created by the Legal Services Society. You can find it online at <http://www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca/>.

If you are raising a grandchild or a relative's child, you may be entitled to government benefits. The amount of help you can get to pay for the child's needs depends on whether you have a custody or guardianship or adoption order. It will also depend on whether your grandchild has been diagnosed with special needs.

This chapter will provide details on these benefits and links of where you might go for more information.

A great place to start if you are trying to figure out which benefits may be available to you is online at http://www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca/resources/fact_sheets/grandparents_benefits.php. This is an interactive version of this table, complete with links to more information.

Once you know which benefits you want to pursue, look at the next section for more specific information on the eligibility requirements and dollar amounts available per month or year.

After the benefits, there is a section in this chapter on child support, which you might be entitled to. You may also be eligible for help to pay medical expenses, and for tax breaks or refunds.

Finally, at the end of the chapter, you will find some useful tips for how to deal with the government workers at the agencies that give out these benefits.

How your benefits are affected

It is important to speak to a social worker and a lawyer before you get a custody order, sign an agreement to provide foster care, or adopt a child.

They can provide accurate information on options and how your benefits will be affected by different legal arrangements.

For some grandparents, the immediate changes that occur when they start to raise their grandchild have a significant impact on their employment or retirement situation. Some working grandparents have to leave their jobs because of the age or special needs of the child in their care. If you need employment or income assistance, contact the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation. <http://www.gov.bc.ca/sdsi/> (Formerly Ministry of Housing and Social Development)

The publication *Your Welfare Rights*, available from the Legal Services Society, is a good resource to learn about income assistance, and Persons with Disabilities assistance. The same organization also has a publication called *When I'm 64* that tells you about all of the different retirement benefits available to people over 60 in BC. For a free copy, see the Family Law website at <http://www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca/> or call the LSS Call Centre on 604-408-2172 for Greater Vancouver and 1-866-577-2525 for the rest of BC

Or call MCFD's After-Hours and Emergency Line:

Vancouver: 604-660-4927 Elsewhere in the Lower Mainland: 604-660-8180 Elsewhere in the province: 1-800-663-9122 (toll-free)
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If you still do not get the benefit after the reconsideration, you can appeal to the Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal (EAAT). More information on reconsiderations and appeals can be found in the LSS publication *Your Welfare Rights*. Many advocates across the province can help with appeals.

Extended Family Program through MCFD and Delegated Aboriginal Agencies.

This program provides financial and other supports to care providers of children out of the parental home, who do not have legal guardianship, and where the parent voluntarily contacts the ministry to initiate an application.

Extended Family Program info:

http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/alternativestofostercare/extended_family.htm?WT.svl=Body

Delegated Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agency contact info:

http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/alternativestofostercare/extended_family.htm?WT.svl=Body

Note: Previous programs – [Child out of the Parental Home](#) (on-reserve) and [Child in the Home of a Relative](#) were discontinued in 2010 although pre-existing files have remained eligible for grandfathered benefits.

Benefits based on other agreements with the ministry

If you have one of the following agreements with the ministry, you could be paid according to the foster care rates:

- a voluntary care agreement
- a restricted foster care agreement

When you make the agreement, you and the social worker will make a list of your grandchild's needs. Be sure that the agreement includes enough financial assistance and support services for you to meet those needs. You and the social worker decide upon the amount and type of support receive based upon the child's needs and available service unless you have a restricted foster care agreement.

Foster care rates

Child's age group	Monthly foster care rate
Per child age 11 and under	\$803.81
Per child age 12–19	\$909.95

The rates shown above are accurate for 2014 and could change at any time.

The ministry also provides relief/respite rates that range between \$35 to \$40 per day if you need to hire a babysitter or put your grandchild in daycare. Contact your social worker to learn the specific rate that applies to your grandchild.

To learn more about foster parent services, contact the BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations toll-free at 1-800-663-9999, or visit their website at <http://bcfosterparents.ca/> or the Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents Association at 1-866-291-7091; or a local MCFD office

In addition, the ministry should pay for the following expenses: medical, dental, medical equipment, assessment and development services, and mental health services. You can also get details on these services from the ministry at:

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/foster/pdf/health_supports_cic.pdf

Note: If you enter into a foster care agreement with the ministry, you must be kept informed (and included as a party to any legal proceedings) regarding any decisions the court makes about continuing care. If the court decides it is not in the child's best interests to return to their family, you and the ministry will need to make choices regarding on-going restricted foster care supports or longer-term legal custody arrangements under the Family Law Act (FLA). [Another longer term custody arrangement is an application for section 54.1 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act \(CFCSA\) – transfer of guardianship after a Continuing Custody Order.](#) This allows the ministry to continue to provide financial support to the care provider. (FLA guardianship does not allow for financial support).

It is a good idea to seek legal advice to know your options. [See Chapter 8 Getting legal help.](#)

Extended family agreement

If you are caring for your grandchild(ren) under an Extended Family Program (EFP) Agreement, monthly payments are as follows:

Extended Family Program (EFP) Agreement rates*

Child's Age Group	Monthly rate
Per child age 11 and under	\$ 554.27
Per child age 12-19	\$ 625.00

** The grandparent(s) may be eligible to receive the Federal Child Tax Benefit or the Child Disability Benefit, the Universal Child Care Benefit and the Provincial Family Bonus. The grandparents are responsible for contacting [the Canada Revenue Agency](#) in order to obtain information about eligibility for these benefits, as well as tax information related to receiving monthly maintenance payments.*

There are additional supports available for children who are cared for under an EFP Agreement, including medical, dental, optical benefits, as well as other supplemental benefits such as child care and respite.

Benefits available to adoptive families

When you adopt a child, you become the child's legal parent. As a result, you take on the responsibility for providing for the child, including financially.

As a result, you will no longer be eligible for most of the government benefits you might have been receiving up until this point. However, you will become eligible for a lot of new benefits. The benefits listed below are available to adoptive families. Read the information in the rest of this chapter to learn more about them and how to apply for them.

Federal assistance

- Income tax deduction for dependents (grandchildren)
- Child Disability Benefit*
- Canada Child Tax Benefit*
- Universal Child Care Benefit (for children under 6)*
- EI Family Supplement
- Adoption Expense Tax Credit

**The adoptive parents are responsible for contacting the [Canada Revenue Agency](#) in order to obtain information about eligibility for these benefits, as well as tax information related to receiving monthly maintenance payments.*

Provincial assistance

- Child Care Subsidy (if you have a low income or if the Ministry of Children and Family Development recommends you)
- BC's Children's Education Fund
- BC's Adoption Expense Tax Credit (harmonized with the federal Expense Tax Credit)
- Post-Adoption Assistance Program (see below for more information)

Other assistance

- your employer must provide the same health benefits for your adopted grandchild as it provides for birth children of employees
- your adopted grandchild has the same inheritance rights as a birth child

Assistance after adoption for children with special needs

Post-adoption assistance, also known as supported adoption, is available for families who adopt children with special needs through the Ministry of Children and Family Development. If an assessment by a ministry social worker determines you are eligible, you can get services such as respite care, counseling, psychotherapy, and special equipment.

If you are considering adopting your grandchild through the ministry, *ask for this assistance*. The ministry may not simply offer it to you. You will need to sign a written agreement with the ministry that outlines the post-adoption assistance your family will get. In some cases, this program will also give maintenance funding to families who are in financial need. To find out more, ask at your local ministry office.

Benefits available to those on income assistance

If you are collecting income assistance, you may be eligible for more benefits because the number of dependent children in your care will have increased. As you know, the amount you get in benefits depends on the number of dependents you have in your family unit. You should speak to your grandchild's social worker and an advocate to find out what different types of assistance you and your grandchild might be eligible for – everything from subsidized bus passes to medical care or a little extra money at Christmas. Following are some of the supplements and benefits you can ask about:

Family bonus top-up supplement

If you are receiving income assistance, [a temporary family bonus top-up supplement](#) may also be available as an advance for a delayed, cancelled, or suspended family bonus payment. Any retroactive child tax benefit or family bonus payments received from the federal government will be deducted from the income assistance cheque in the month it is received.

Health supplements

If you are receiving income assistance, you may also be eligible to get [various health supplements](#) to cover the cost of your grandchild's health care needs. Health supplements include supplements such as medical equipment and supplies; medical therapies; optical, dental, dietary, and drug/alcohol treatment coverage.

[School start-up supplement](#)

The ministry may give you extra money if you are on income assistance and caring for a dependent child.

Hardship assistance

If you are not eligible for income assistance or Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefits, hardship assistance may be available to help your family meet their essential needs for food and shelter. Different rates apply depending on whether your family includes someone who is disabled. For the rates, see the links below:

Hardship Support Rate Table:

<http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/mhr/hardship.htm>

Hardship Support Rate Table for Persons with Disabilities:

http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/mhr/hardship_pwd.htm

Income and Exemptions

It is a good idea to review the Ministry of Social Development and Social Inclusion "[Income and Exemptions](#)" webpage or the publication [Your Welfare Rights](#) from the Legal Services Society to learn more about earned/unearned income, as well as any exemptions you may be eligible for if you want to apply for income assistance but you are worried that your income is too high.

Child Tax or Child Disability Benefits are not considered income. However, within this section there may be certain earned family unit income that is taxable, but where portions of it are

considered exempt. For example, if both grandparents are earning employment income but have a designated disability, they may be eligible to deduct \$750/month per person from their net income for tax purposes.

You can access the ministry's online resource at:

http://www.gov.bc.ca/meia/online_resource/verification_and_eligibility/

Housing assistance

For detailed information on housing assistance – both for homeowners and for renters – see the LSS publication [When I'm 64](#) or the provincial government's [BC Seniors Guide](#) (available for free and in multiple languages at your local library or MLA's office). There are many programs out there to help you – to pay your rent, to make repairs to your home, or to find a home – if you are 55 or older.

In addition, regardless of age, BC Housing helps more than 55,700 households with low to moderate incomes by providing them with subsidized housing. For information on their housing registry, visit <http://www.bchousing.org/providers/registry> or contact:

BC Housing: Housing Services branch

Lower Mainland: **604-433-2218**

Elsewhere in BC: **1-800-257-7756 (toll-free)**

Medical benefits

Healthy Kids Program

The Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation (the ministry in charge of welfare) offers the [Healthy Kids Program](#), which extends basic dental and vision care to children up to 18 years of age who are from low-income and modest-income families. Families qualify for this program if they are receiving full or partial MSP premium assistance. For more information, contact MSDSI by calling 1-866-866-0800 (toll-free; press 4 and then 2).

Child Support

Much of the information in this section comes from JP Boyd’s Family Law Resource, available online at <http://wiki.clicklaw.bc.ca/index.php/Jpboyd>

There are generally five questions a court will consider when you apply for child support (also called maintenance):

1. Does the person seeking the order have a right to child support?
 - Yes. Grandparents who have guardianship of their grandchildren have a right to make an application for child support under the *Family Law Act*.
 - Also, you can make a claim for child support on behalf of the child even if you do not have guardianship (under the *Family Law Act*, Section 149(2)). Child support is something the child is legally entitled to, even though the parent pays it to the person caring for the child. Talk to an advocate or a lawyer for more information.
2. Is the child eligible for child support?
 - Probably. According to the FLA, children under the age of 19 whose parents have separated or divorced are eligible for support, as well as children over the age of 19 who require continued support because of a disability or because they attend school full-time are often still eligible as provided in Section 146 FLA.
3. Who must pay the child support?
 - The only people obligated to pay child support are: parents, guardians who are not parents, and step-parents (if they contributed to the support and maintenance of the child for one year). See the FLA, Sections 146 & 147 for more information.
4. How long should the child receive support payments?
 - Typically, support will end when a child turns 19, unless the child stays in school full-time. Sometimes, a court has also allowed an “adult child” to receive support, which means a person over 19 who is still dependent on their parents due to illness, disability, or another cause. How the courts address this situation varies from case to case.

5. How much support should the child receive?
 - Generally, child support in Canada is calculated by the federal Child Support Guidelines, which looks at a person's income and the number of children that person is supporting in order to determine the amount of support. The guidelines apply to all parents who are not together, whether they were married, lived in an opposite- or same- sex common-law relationship, or never lived together at all.

How to apply for child support

Grandparents raising their grandchildren may claim child support, because parents still have a legal responsibility to provide for their children, whether they raise them or not. It can be more complex for grandparents to make their case for child support.

That means you will most likely need legal advice from a lawyer and/or an advocate to get support. One of the most common ways for grandparents to seek support is for them to ask a court to change an already existing order. For instance, there might already be a court order saying that a child's father has to pay the child's mother a certain amount of support money each month. If the grandparent is actually providing the child's care, the grandparent can ask the court to change the order so that the father pays the support money to the grandparent instead.

However, you should know that the grandparent's claim may cause the father to reconsider and apply to have the child's residence. If you go this route, the court may look into your grandchild's current parental arrangements and make changes that you would not like – for instance, the father could ask that the child live with him instead of the mother. A lawyer will be able to consider this possibility and other issues to help you determine the best course for pursuing child support. It is also possible that you will not need to go to court to get child support payments. If the parents agree, you may be able to get support payments that one parent used to pay to the other redirected to you by filing a consent order at the court registry, which means you will not have to have a court hearing. For more information on redirecting support payments, contact the BC Child Support Info line (see below). If either parent does not agree, you may have to go to court after all. As a grandparent, you will not be able to make an application under the *Divorce Act* for child support, since you are not a spouse. Instead, you must use the *Family Law Act*, which can be found at: <http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/> To read the Child Support Guidelines, see the following website: <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fl-df/> and <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fl-df/child-enfant/look-rech.asp> for child's support calculations. The Ministry of Attorney General's website on the topic: <http://www.justicebc.ca/en/fam/index.html>

Child support and taxes

If you are a grandparent receiving child support payments from one or both of your grandchild's parents, you do not have to report the child support payments as income. This means you do not have to pay tax on the child support payments. For more information, see the Attorney General's website at: <http://www.justicebc.ca/en/fam/index.html>

Collecting Child Support

The agency below can answer your questions about getting support payments redirected to you. *You should be aware that this support money may be deducted from some benefits you receive.*

BC Child Support Info line:

Lower Mainland: **604-660-2192**
Elsewhere in BC: **1-888-216-2211**

In addition, this agency might be able to help you if the parents stop honoring an agreement or a court order to provide support:

Family Maintenance Enforcement Program

Lower Mainland: **604-775-0796**
Greater Victoria: **250-356-5995**
Elsewhere in BC: **1-800-668-3637 (toll-free)**
Website: <https://www.fmep.gov.bc.ca/resources/>

Child Care Subsidy

The Child Care Subsidy is a monthly payment from the provincial government that helps families with low incomes pay for some of the costs of child care. You may be eligible for the program if you:

- are working and earning a low wage
- are looking for work
- are attending school or a job training program
- have child care recommended by the ministry*
- have a medical condition that interferes with your ability to care for the child, or
- are caring for a child attending a licensed preschool

**Note The child care subsidy and the child care surcharge are available to care providers without income testing (don't need to be low income) when a child is cared for under the Extended Family Program, as well as the out-of-care temporary and permanent orders.*

To apply for the Child Care Subsidy, ask your grandchild's social worker or another staff member at the ministry. You can also phone [Service BC](#)

Service BC Hours: Monday through Friday, 7:30am to 5pm Pacific Time.
Phone Victoria: **250-387-6121**, Vancouver: **604-660-2421**, Elsewhere in B.C.: **1-800-663-7867**
Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD) - Vancouver: 604-775-0303 Elsewhere in B.C.: 1-800-661-8773
Website: <http://www.servicebc.gov.bc.ca/>

Further information on the Child Care Subsidy Program is available on the ministry's website: <http://www.gov.bc.ca/mcf/>

Service Canada

Service Canada has agents ready to inform you about various federal government supplements and benefits you may be entitled to while raising your grandchild. For more information:

Telephone: **1-800-O-Canada (1-800-622-6232)** TTY: 1-800-926-9105.
Services are available from 8:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
Or visit your local Service Canada Centre. To find the location online, go to:
<http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/cgi-bin/sc-srch.cgi?ln=eng>

Employment Insurance

The Employment Insurance (EI) program has a number of programs that you might be eligible for if your employment situation is disrupted by caring for your grandchild.

For more information on EI benefits, contact [Service Canada](#) at the number above.

Maternity/paternity benefits

If you are employed and must decrease your weekly earnings by more than 40 percent to care for your newborn, newly adopted, or hospitalized grandchild and have worked 600 insured hours within the last year (or since your last EI claim), you may be eligible for these benefits. You can receive them for a maximum of 50 weeks. Options are available for you and/or your spouse to claim these benefits, and may include reduced hours as opposed to full-time leave.

Complaints process

If you disagree with an EI-related decision, you have the right to appeal for reconsideration under the Employment Insurance Act. Information on how to file and prepare for an appeal for reconsideration can be found at <http://www.ae-ei.gc.ca/eng/home.shtml>. Advocates may be available to assist with your appeal.

Canada Pension Plan

The Canada Pension Plan has a number of benefits that you and your grandchild might be entitled to. For more information on CPP benefits, contact [Service Canada](#).

Survivor benefits

If your grandchild has a parent who is deceased, he or she might be entitled to collect that parent's CPP benefits as a survivor. The parent has to have made contributions for the minimum qualifying period. To be eligible, the child must be under 18, or 18–25 years old and attending a recognized educational institution. This benefit is paid at a flat rate; as of 2008, it was \$208.77 per month.

Disability benefits

If one of your grandchild's parents is disabled and receiving CPP disability, your grandchild might also be eligible for payments under the same program. The conditions and flat rate are the same as for survivor benefits (see the previous section).

Likewise, when you have contributed enough to CPP, if you were to experience a severe and/or prolonged condition that impacted your ability to work and you submit an application before your death, your grandchild could receive CPP survivor benefits on your behalf.

You should speak directly to a [Service Canada](#) agent to learn more about the benefits that may apply to your situation. Service Canada has a condition that a child may receive no more than two of the children's benefits – so for example, they could only receive survivor benefits from two relatives, or survivor benefits from one relative and disability benefits from another. See the previous page for Service Canada's contact information.

Early retirement plans

If you find that you need to retire early because you have taken on your grandchild's primary care, consult with [Service Canada](#) to learn about your monthly pension allotment and future employment plans if you intend to return to work. Those who apply and receive their CPP retirement pension can later return to work, but can no longer contribute to CPP.

Retirement contributions while caring for children

CPP has a “drop-out provision” you may want to explore further with [Service Canada](#). Months of low or zero earnings while caring for a dependent child under the age of 7 may be excluded from the contributory period. This provision means that, if you were unable to contribute as much as usual because you were caring for your grandchild, your later CPP benefits will not be lowered as a result. The provision applies to the person who received a family allowance benefit or those who are eligible for the Child Tax Benefit.

If a person continues to work and contribute to CPP after turning 65 and has higher earnings than previously, those earnings can be substituted for similar periods of earnings before the age of 65 (during child-rearing years). It will be important for you to have tracked your earnings and CPP contributions, so be sure to keep copies of your pay stubs and other documents.

Tax credits and federal benefits

Canada Child Tax Benefit

For more information on the credits described below, contact the [Canada Revenue Agency](#) (CRA) by calling Service Canada.

You can apply for the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) through the [Canada Revenue Agency](#); if you are eligible, you automatically get the BC Family Bonus and BC Earned Income Benefit. *While these payments must be declared on the CIHR Monthly Report, they do not affect CIHR payments.*

To apply, complete an application form and send it to the CRA. You can download a copy of the application form from the CRA website at <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/menu-e.html> or get one from a CRA office.

When you are ready to submit your application, you will need to show your passport and/or your Permanent Resident Card, Record of Landing (IMM 1000), or Confirmation of Permanent Residence (IMM 5292).

For information on how to apply for the Canada Child Tax Benefit, see <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/benefits/cctb/menu-e.html> or call 1-800-387-1193.

When you apply, you should bring (or send copies of) the following:

- proof of the child’s age, such as a birth certificate, baptismal record, or school document.
- proof of your relationship to the child. In many cases, the caseworker who handles your application can get this information from public records, but it is a good idea to bring in any documents you have. For example, if you have a birth certificate for the child showing his or her parents’ names, then you just need to establish your relation to one of the parents.

BC Family Bonus

This [benefit](#) is a tax-free payment to moderate-income families with dependent children. You get it automatically (without needing to apply) as part of the Canada Child Tax Benefit payment, which is calculated using the previous year's income tax return. If you are receiving income assistance but have not yet gotten the family bonus, a [temporary family bonus top-up supplement](#) may also be available from [Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation](#).

Family Supplement

This program provides additional benefits for low-income families with children. If you are eligible for the Canada Child Tax Benefit through the Canada Revenue Agency, then you are eligible for this supplement. It makes sure your net family income is no less than \$25,921 per year.

Universal Child Care Benefit

This benefit is meant to help families pay for child care for children under the age of 6, and it is paid in installments of \$100 per month per child. To get it, you must first apply for the Canada Child Tax Benefit; for more information about that benefit or to apply online, call Service Canada or go <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/cctb/>.

BC Adoption Expense Tax Credit

If you adopt a child who is under 18, you can claim a tax credit of up to \$10,445 for eligible expenses related to the adoption. This can include the legal, travel, and administrative costs you paid during the adoption process, but only during the tax year in which the adoption was finalized. To learn more, go to <http://www.cra.gc.ca/> and type “adoption expense tax credit” into the search box.

Other Tax credits

If you find you have moved into a lower income bracket as a result of the changes in your life relating to caring for your grandchild, there may be other tax credits that you are now eligible for, such as [GST/HST refunds](#) and the [BC Low Income Climate Action Tax Credit](#). You might want to talk to a financial professional to take full advantage of all of the financial benefits, supplements, and credits that come with the complexities of raising your grandchild.

Benefits for children with special needs

Child Disability Benefit

If you care for a child under age 18 with a severe and prolonged physical or mental impairment, you are probably eligible for a tax-free payment of up to \$2,395 per year (\$199.58 per month) from the federal government.

To learn more about this benefit and whether the grandchild you are raising may be eligible, call 1-800-387-1193 or go their webpage at www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts.

Post-Adoption Assistance

The [Adoptive Families Association of BC](#) provides policy information about financial assistance:

Once you adopt, you are legally responsible for your grandchild in every way, including financially. You are only eligible for [Post-Adoption Assistance](#) if your grandchild has been diagnosed with special needs and your family has an income below a certain level.

This program has three parts:

- **specific service payments** – to purchase services for the child or the family. This can include counselling, specialized training, medical equipment, and other services related to the child's special needs
- **direct service support** – access to ministry services to address the child's or the family's needs, including such things as respite care, child care, or parenting classes
- **maintenance** – similar to foster care maintenance, but continuing after adoption

To get the assistance, you must negotiate an agreement with the ministry every two years until the child turns 19. For more information, see the Adoptive Families Association of BC's website: <http://www.bcadoption.com/>.

Special Needs Supplement

The Special Needs Supplement assists caregivers with the cost of securing a child care space (up to \$150) if their income is below a certain level. The Ministry of Children and Family Development provides this benefit along with the Child Care Subsidy.

Additional supports and resources may be available to help children with special needs succeed in child care settings – ask your grandchild's social worker or an advocate for more information.

To apply for the Special Needs Supplement, you will need to complete and submit the [Child Care Subsidy Special Needs form](#) along with your [Child Care Subsidy Application form](#) and [Child Care Subsidy Arrangement form](#). The [Special Needs Supplement \(Child Care Subsidy Needs\) form](#) must be **completed and signed** by one of the authorized professionals noted on the form

Supported Child Care

Supported Child Development (SCD) agencies contract with the ministry to provide a range of consulting and support services so that children with special needs from birth to 12 years of age can be included in regular child care settings.

When there is a lack of other community options for social inclusion, youth from 13–18 years of age may also receive SCD services on a case-by-case basis.

Approach the local SCD agency directly, or contact the local ministry office for information about additional resources. Further information is available on the government website

http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/spec_needs/scd.htm

How to interact with agencies that provide benefits

It can be intimidating to ask for benefits, even when you are entitled to receive the assistance. Here are a few tips to help you navigate the system and get the help that you and your family need:

- Be patient. You may encounter long waits on the phone or in person.
- Many agencies do not have the staff to take your calls immediately. The programs you need to deal with may have automated answering systems or answering machines.
- Save time when applying for any type of benefit by calling first and getting a list of all the information and papers you will need. Ask how long you may have to wait, so you can plan your time.
- Call during low-volume phone times. The volume and type of calls each agency receives will differ. It is often easier to get through to help lines during the early morning hours on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. The busiest phone times appear to be during lunch hours (11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.) and on Mondays and Fridays.
- Keep a log. Always write down the name, title, and phone number of the person to whom you speak, and the name, address, and business hours of the agency. Record the time and date of your call or visit and the important details of your conversation for future reference (see below).
- If you make an appointment with an agency, plan to arrive 15 minutes before your meeting to fill out any forms they might need. Once the appointment is over, ask what the next step in the process will be and how soon you can expect a decision.
- It is difficult to get some services. Keep trying or ask for alternative place to try for a similar service.
- Work cooperatively with your caseworker. If difficulties arise that you cannot settle with the worker, ask to speak with the supervisor.
- If it is necessary, file a grievance. Most agencies have complaint procedures for difficult situations.

- Navigating the system can be exhausting and time consuming. Take a break to recharge yourself or ask for help from someone in your community, or from an advocate.

Each social service agency you deal with probably will have a different requirement and process, so you should expect to provide different kinds of information to each one when you first apply. To make the process as smooth as possible, prepare a list of questions before you contact an organization (see the sample below). Record the questions and the information you receive in a notebook so you can refer to it in the future.

A typical conversation might begin something like this: “Hello, I am raising my grandchild. I would like some information about programs that can help me provide him/her with _____ (this can be any type of assistance you need, such as help with meals, medical care, transportation, etc.). Can you please answer some questions for me?”

Sample questions for government agencies

- What types of services do you provide?
- How do I get an application?
- If I cannot complete the application by myself, can someone at your agency help me? If not, where can I go for help?
- What documents will you need to verify my identity (driver’s license, Social Insurance Card, etc.)?
- What documents will you need to verify my income (paycheque stubs, pension forms, OAS cheque stubs, etc.)?
- If I do not have the proof I need to verify my identity or income, can I give it to you later?
- If I do not have the documents, can someone at your agency help me get them?
- What documents will you need to verify my child’s identity (birth certificate, Social Insurance Number, etc.) and do they need to be originals?
- Will all of my documents be returned to me?
- What records are kept on file?
- Once I have completed the application, will I need to schedule an appointment to have it reviewed?
- How long can I expect to wait for my benefits to start?
- Can the application be done online?
- What is the name and number of someone to contact if questions come up?

This Legal Guide will be updated regularly. We are counting on readers to alert us to any errors, omissions or unclear content. Please send your feedback to “Communications” via:

office@parentsupportbc.ca.