

## FACTSHEET

September 22, 2008

Ministry of Housing and Social Development

### PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

- The goal of the *Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act* is greater independence for people with disabilities, including security of income, enhanced well-being and participation in the community.
- The *Act* recognizes that persons with disabilities face unique challenges in daily living and may require continuous assistance or supports to find employment.

#### Definition of Persons with Disabilities:

- A person with disabilities is a person with a physical or mental impairment who is significantly restricted in his or her ability to perform daily living activities either "continuously or periodically for extended periods" and, as a result of these restrictions, requires assistance with daily living activities. Assistance could come from another person, an assistance animal or an assistive device.
- The legislation establishes a disability "designation" which is maintained unless a review shows that a person's situation has changed. Periodically, the ministry will review files. If during the review additional information from a health professional is needed, the person will be asked to submit a new physician and/or assessor report.
- The legislation focuses on functional limitations, which makes the definition of disability consistent with human rights case law.
- The criteria specifically address those individuals with mental health disorders.
- The criteria also include those with episodic illnesses by acknowledging that restrictions to daily living activities can be continuous or periodic for extended periods.

#### Additional Supports:

- People receiving disability assistance are eligible for additional supports such as medical coverage that includes Medical Services Plan, no-deductible for Pharmacare and other medical benefits such as dental and optical coverage.
- People with disabilities are also eligible for low-cost annual bus passes and are exempt from time limits for receiving assistance.

#### Employment Supports:

- The ministry offers a range of specialized services that allows persons with disabilities to take advantage of employment opportunities as they are able.
- Persons with disabilities who want to work will have an Employment Plan outlining the supports they need. Persons with disabilities receive the same rate regardless of their ability to work.
- Persons with disabilities also receive an earnings exemption of \$500, which has more than doubled since 2002.

- If clients leave assistance for employment, they keep their designation and maintain their medical assistance. If they return to BC Employment and Assistance, they do not have to reapply for disability status to re-establish their eligibility for assistance.
- More information on the supports and services available under the Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities is available on the ministry's website at: <http://www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/pwd.htm>.

#### **Other Employment Supports:**

- A \$25 million Disability Supports for Employment endowment was established to provide supports that assist people with disabilities in the workplace.
- Minister's Council on Employment for Persons with Disabilities -- which brings together members from the public and private sectors to jointly create support services for persons with disabilities.

#### **Persons with Disabilities Designation Application:**

- Application forms are available to individuals who are either financially eligible or potentially eligible for disability assistance or income assistance. For an application form, please consult with a ministry worker at one of the [Housing and Social Development offices](#) across the province.
- Application forms have three sections. Section 1 must be completed by the applicant and Section 2 by his/her doctor. Section 3 must be completed by a prescribed professional of his/her choice, and be, preferably, familiar with the applicant.
- Prescribed professionals include: medical practitioners, registered psychologists, registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, occupational therapists, physical therapists, social workers, chiropractors and nurse practitioners.

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For more information: The Ministry of Housing and Social Development Info Line at: 1 866 866-0800