

## What is the BC Employment and Assistance Program?

In B.C., the Employment and Assistance Program (also called welfare) provides support and shelter assistance for those who are eligible. For most people the program is temporary, but for some it may be a long-term need.

## Who is eligible?

You may be eligible if you are:

- out of work or earning very little
- awaiting other income
- unable to work
- in immediate need of food, shelter or urgent medical attention

## How do I apply?

Complete the Self-Serve Assessment and Application Tool online: [www.sdsi.gov.bc.ca/bcea.htm](http://www.sdsi.gov.bc.ca/bcea.htm). You can also call 1-866-866-0800 or visit an Employment and Income Assistance office. After you apply, you will either be asked to do a work search or be invited to an eligibility interview.

## What is a work search?

Before the eligibility interview date, you are expected to look for employment. If you do not find employment during the work search period, the next step is an eligibility interview.

## What is an eligibility interview?

An eligibility interview takes place with a worker from the B.C. government who decides what course of action is best suited to your situation.

If you do not find employment during your work-search period, and you return to the ministry for an eligibility interview, ministry staff will:

- verify the information you provide
- determine your eligibility for income assistance
- assess your readiness for employment
- work with you to develop an employment plan

It is important to prepare your information before you have your eligibility interview. You must bring proof of your work search activities, including a current resume and a record of employers contacted.

### **Where can I get further help and information?**

- The ministry website provides a range of helpful information about Employment and Income Assistance: [www.sdsi.gov.bc.ca/bcea.htm](http://www.sdsi.gov.bc.ca/bcea.htm).
- [AdminLawBC.ca](http://AdminLawBC.ca) – provides information on a range of tribunals, including the Employment Assistance Appeal Tribunal. There is a helpful checklist for preparing for a hearing.
- Legal Services Society has a booklet called: “[Your Welfare Rights](#)”. It includes a chapter on how to apply for welfare.
- BC Employment and Assistance Factsheets, from the B.C. Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation: [www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/bcea.htm](http://www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/bcea.htm).

### **What if I disagree with the results of my eligibility interview?**

You have the right to challenge decisions when a monthly benefit or supplement is refused, reduced, or stopped by requesting a reconsideration.

If you are not satisfied with the reconsideration result, you can file an appeal to the Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal (EAAT). The EAAT is like a court – it has authority to make decisions in Employment and Assistance Appeal cases.

REMEMBER: Do not be afraid to challenge a decision to try to get what you need.

As soon as you find out about a ministry decision that you disagree with, do the following:

- Ask the ministry to give you their decision in writing. You should also ask it to write down the reasons for its decision, and to give you copies of everything it used to make the decision. It is your right to have this information.
- Find an advocate (Visit: [www.povnet.org](http://www.povnet.org)). Advocates can help you advance your case. They can help you prepare the paperwork and tell you whether your appeal or reconsideration might succeed (or not).
- Find out what the deadlines are and be very careful to submit paperwork on time.

### **What if I don't speak or understand English?**

The Self-Serve Assessment and Application tool is available in English only. If you need help, contact a friend, family member or a translator. If you need help finding an interpreter to understand this process, contacting your local immigrant settlement agency for help is a good first step. For income assistance information and services, call 1-866-866-0800.