

**Revised Policy on Wheelchair User Fees**  
Frequently Asked Questions  
March 24, 2015

## **Introduction**

This FAQ document is part of information package for service providers supporting the implementation and communication of the revised policy on wheelchair user fees. It should be read in conjunction with the other documents in the package.

There are five documents in the information package:

- The Ministry of Health's (the Ministry) policy document entitled "Revised Policy on Wheelchair Fees – Approach," dated March 24, 2015.
- A policy interpretation guide dated March 24, 2015.
- This FAQ document dated March 24, 2015.
- A PowerPoint presentation dated March 24, 2015.
- A document entitled "Revised Policy on Wheelchair Fees – Next Steps," dated March 24, 2015.

## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

### **1. Who can prescribe basic wheelchairs?**

Final approval must be made by a professional registered with either the College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia or the College of Physical Therapists of British Columbia for whom wheelchair prescription is within the professional's scope of practice.

### **2. What qualifies as a basic wheelchair?**

A basic wheelchair is a manual, self-propelled, safe and durable wheelchair that enhances personal mobility; has a basic contoured seat cushion; and which is reasonable to obtain and maintain.

A basic wheelchair is a wheelchair without modification, upgrade, customization or specialization.

A custom made wheelchair is not a basic wheelchair.

### **3. Who determines whether a wheelchair is basic, modified, or specialized?**

Keeping within the context of the policy paper and the policy interpretation guide which provide the defining criteria, the determination of whether a wheelchair is basic, modified, or specialized must be made by a professional registered with either the College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia or the College of Physical Therapists of British Columbia for whom wheelchair prescription is within the professional's scope of practice.

### **4. Who owns basic wheelchairs that are provided as a benefit?**

Basic wheelchairs provided as a benefit are not the property of the client. When the basic wheelchair is no longer needed, it must be returned to the service provider.

### **5. Who owns modifications to the modified basic wheelchair that are provided as a benefit?**

As the client is responsible for the full cost of modifications (equipment and service<sup>1</sup> costs), modifications (equipment) are owned by the client and remain the property of the client when the basic wheelchair is returned to the service provider.

### **6. What agreements can the service provider require from a client who is provided a basic wheelchair as a benefit?**

At the discretion of the service provider, an agreement can be required from a client receiving a basic wheelchair as a benefit. The topics in the agreement may include, but are not limited to, responsibility for damage which is beyond regular wear and tear.

### **7. Who is responsible for basic maintenance of wheelchairs?**

The maintenance of wheelchairs varies with the ownership of the wheelchair.

#### *Wheelchair owned by the service provider:*

The service provider is responsible for basic maintenance of all types of wheelchairs that are owned by the service provider.

#### *Wheelchair owned by the client:*

The client is responsible for basic maintenance of all types of wheelchairs that are owned by the client. The client may either enter into an agreement with the service provider or another party for the provision of maintenance.

If a client is not maintaining their own wheelchairs in good working condition and thus compromising their own safety and/or safety of others, the service provider can perform the basic maintenance and charge the client for the service.

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<sup>1</sup> Service includes installation and adjustments; excludes basic maintenance and cleaning costs.

**8. Are there any restrictions on the modifications and upgrades that a client can do to a basic wheelchair owned by the service provider?**

The client cannot permanently alter a basic wheelchair without the consent of the service provider.

Modifications and upgrades to a basic wheelchair approved by a registered physical therapist or an occupational therapist which do not permanently alter the wheelchair and which are done at the client's expense do not require the service provider's consent.

**9. What if a basic wheelchair does not meet the medically required need?**

Only basic wheelchairs which are medically required and prescribed will be provided as a benefit. If the expense of modifications and upgrades or the expense of a customized/ specialized wheelchair creates financial hardship, the client can apply for a temporary rate reduction of their client rate.

**10. What if the client already has a basic wheelchair?**

If a client acquired or entered into a rental agreement for a basic wheelchair or modified basic wheelchair before the policy came into effect, no reimbursement will be available. The client continues to be responsible for the maintenance of any such wheelchair. This applies even though the wheelchair is medically required, is prescribed or finally approved by a registered Physical Therapist (PT) and Occupational Therapist (OT).

After the policy comes into effect, a client has the option to continue to keep their own wheelchair or transfer into one provided as a residential care benefit (if it is medically required, prescribed, and approved by a registered PT/OT). However, all expenditure required to discontinue an active rental agreement and modify/ upgrade a new basic wheelchair is the responsibility of the client.

**11. What about walkers, crutches, canes, other devices and other chargeable extras?**

Walkers, crutches, canes and other devices are still chargeable extras.

**12. What about all the other chargeable extras?**

The remaining chargeable extras policy will remain unchanged. The Ministry in collaboration with health authorities will continue to update the chargeable extras policy as issues arise.

**13. Should a seat belt for transportation and positioning purposes be provided as a benefit at no additional cost to the client?**

Yes.

**14. What if a client requires a cushion indicated for compromised skin integrity?**

A cushion indicated for compromised skin integrity is a chargeable extra.

**15. Can a service provider charge a damage deposit for a basic wheelchair?**

No. A service provider cannot charge a damage deposit for a basic wheelchair.

**16. What about wheelchairs which have been donated to the service provider?**

The Ministry directs that service providers must not charge clients for wheelchairs which have been donated.

Even if a client requires a specialized or modified basic wheelchair – if the equipment provided to the client was donated, the service provider must not charge the client for it.

Any modifications to a donated specialized wheelchair or to a donated basic wheelchair are the financial responsibility of the client.

**17. Are bariatric wheelchairs a chargeable extra?**

Yes.

**18. The basic wheelchair criteria/ definition indicates “upholstery back.” Can you elaborate on this?**

The meaning and intent for the term “upholstery back” is a non-solid back.

**19. Can a health authority make exceptions to this revised policy?**

Any exceptions to this policy would need to be made in accordance with Chapter 1A of the Home and Community Care Policy Manual.

Client Specific Questions:

**20. What if I rented, purchased or acquired a wheelchair with my own resources prior to the revised policy coming into effect?**

If you purchased or rented a wheelchair with your own resources prior to the revised policy, there is no reimbursement/ retroactive payment available. But if the cost of the equipment is causing financial hardship (defined as an inability to pay for adequate food, monthly mortgage/ rent, sufficient home heat, prescribed medication, or other required prescribed health care services), speak to your service provider about applying for a temporary rate reduction of your client rate.

**21. What about the maintenance and cleaning costs I incurred before the revised policy came into effect?**

There is no reimbursement/ retroactive payment available.

**22. If I bought a basic wheelchair prior to this revised policy, can I still benefit?**

If you have been prescribed a basic wheelchair you are entitled to receive a basic wheelchair as a benefit even if you already own or rent your own wheelchair. You may especially wish to take advantage of this if the basic wheelchair you would receive as a benefit would be superior in meeting your needs than the wheelchair you currently rent/ own.

Basic maintenance and cleaning would also be a benefit to you if you switch to a basic wheelchair provided as a benefit.

However, all expenditure required to discontinue an active rental agreement and modify/ upgrade a new basic wheelchair is the responsibility of the client.

It is the intention of government that everyone should have access to the medically required equipment that they need. If the medically required equipment is a basic wheelchair, the equipment will be provided as a benefit at no additional cost to the client. If the cost of a specialized wheelchair or the costs of modifications to a basic wheelchair cause you serious financial hardship, you may be eligible for a temporary rate reduction of your client rate.