

Policy Interpretation Guide

Revised Policy on Wheelchair Fees

**INTEGRATED PRIMARY AND COMMUNITY CARE BRANCH, HEALTH SERVICES POLICY AND QUALITY
ASSURANCE BRANCH, MINISTRY OF HEALTH, PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

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Introduction

In September 2013, the Ministry of Health publicly committed to a review of residential care facility practices regarding chargeable extras – including wheelchair fees. The provincial review covered 308 publicly subsidized residential care facilities and indicated the following:

- Wheelchair fees are the most common non-discretionary medically required chargeable extra in 247 of the facilities that responded to the survey.
- 86 percent of surveyed facilities provide residents with wheelchair purchase/ rental options directly or through an external vendor.
- Inconsistent practices in the charging of wheelchair fees. Of the facilities that directly provided the service, 2/3 provided it free of cost and 1/3 charged for the service.
- Inconsistent practices in providing information to clients on the optional nature of chargeable extras and the need to receive client consent for charges.
- Varied practices for situations where clients cannot afford extra fees.

The provincial review concluded that the current policy governing wheelchair fees was the one area that needed further clarification and revision in the context of significant use of wheelchairs by residents with high complex care needs.

Therefore, a revised policy is coming into effect. The revised policy indicates that basic wheelchairs for personal exclusive use – if they are medically required and prescribed by a registered Occupational Therapist or a registered Physical Therapist – will be provided as a residential care benefit and not as a chargeable extra. For more information on the next steps, please read the accompanying document entitled “Revised Policy on Wheelchair User Fees – Next Steps,” dated March 24, 2015.

Maintenance and cleaning of basic wheelchairs will be the responsibility of the service provider.

Clients requiring modifications or upgrades to a basic wheelchair will still be responsible for the full cost of the modifications; service providers are not expected to provide this service. So also, specialized or customized wheelchairs (including custom manufactured wheelchairs) will continue to be the financial responsibility of the client.

Donated wheelchairs will not be subject to this policy. The service provider must provide donated equipment to the client at no cost to the client - even if it's specialized equipment. Any modifications to a donated specialized wheelchair or to a donated basic wheelchair are the financial responsibility of the client.

To ensure that all residents have access to medically required and prescribed services, 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 (hardship waiver) of their client rate.

Information Package

This policy interpretation guide is part of an information package (5 documents in total) supporting implementation and communication. The five documents are:

- The Ministry of Health’s policy document entitled “Revised Policy on Wheelchair Fees – Approach,” dated March 24, 2015.
- This policy interpretation guide dated March 24, 2015.
- A document on Frequently Asked Questions, 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.

Definitions

The Ministry of Health’s approved policy document defines a basic wheelchair in policy as follows:

***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 working group comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Health and each health authority was constituted in the spring of 2015 and a sub-committee of clinicians was formed to provide additional interpretation criteria:

*A **basic wheelchair** possesses the following attributes only: light-weight frame, adjustable seat height, variable seat width/depth, adjustable tension upholstery back, adjustable padded arm rests, rear wheels (solid, pneumatic or semi-pneumatic), front casters, wheel brakes (with brake extensions as necessary), anti-tippers, regular swing-away foot rests, rear handles, and a weight capacity of 113.4 kg/250 lbs.*

*A **basic contoured seat cushion** is a cushion not indicated for compromised skin integrity.*

***Basic maintenance** includes minor and/or non-structural wheelchair adjustments (provided on an as needed basis) to preserve the clinical effectiveness of a prescribed wheelchair. Repair/replacement of wheelchair components not caused by misuse will be provided at no cost. Repair/replacement of wheelchair components due to normal wear and tear will be provided at no cost to the resident.*

***Basic cleaning** includes the removal of visible dirt and debris (provided on an as needed basis) to preserve the clinical effectiveness of a prescribed wheelchair and resident dignity.*

Sample Loan Agreement

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. A sample loan agreement is appended to this policy interpretation guide.

Sample Basic Wheelchair Loan Agreement

I (Name of client), the resident in facility xxxxx accept the loan of a basic wheelchair on the following terms and conditions:

1. I understand that the basic wheelchair always remains the property of the service provider and that it must be returned at the service provider's request (for any reason).
2. I understand that I am only entitled to the use of the basic wheelchair while I meet the eligibility criteria for publicly subsidized home and community care services as described in the *Home and Community Care Policy Manual* Chapter 2.B Eligibility, while my individualized client care plan includes long-term residential care, while I am a long-term resident of residential care, and while a basic wheelchair is prescribed to me.
3. If I move outside of British Columbia, I will return the basic wheelchair before I leave the province.
4. I will only use the basic wheelchair for my own personal mobility.
5. I will not sell, loan, or allow any other person to use the basic wheelchair.
6. I will not pledge the basic wheelchair as security in a financial loan or similar agreement.
7. I will store the basic wheelchair in a secure, heated and dry place to avoid damage or loss.
8. I am responsible for using the basic wheelchair with reasonable care. I will not misuse the basic wheelchair, intentionally damage it, or be negligent in protecting it from damage, theft and loss.
9. I will make the basic wheelchair available for maintenance and cleaning as required by the service provider.
10. I will not remove, erase, or deface any identification stickers, tags, or similar markings.
11. I understand that the service provider may re-assess my medically required need for a basic wheelchair at any time. I understand and accept that if I am re-assessed as not requiring a basic wheelchair, the service provider can take the basic wheelchair back. I agree to make myself available for any requested re-assessment and to return the basic wheelchair promptly if requested.
12. If I exit residential care, I agree to return the basic wheelchair to the service provider before leaving.
13. If I move from one residential care facility to another residential care facility, I understand that I may need to return my basic wheelchair to the service provider and request another basic wheelchair from my new facility.
14. I will not make any permanent alterations to the basic wheelchair. If I modify or upgrade the basic wheelchair (with a different backrest, different cushion, different leg supports, different arm supports, etc.) I will not permanently alter the basic wheelchair in doing so.
15. I understand that if the basic wheelchair suffers damage beyond regular wear and tear, if it is stolen, or if it is lost, my liability can be as high as the replacement cost of the basic wheelchair.

By signing, I acknowledge that I have read and understood this loan agreement and that I accept all of these terms and conditions.

Signature of client or client's legal representative

Please print your name here

Date of Signature