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Executive Leadership
Regional Health Authorities

Daniel Fontaine
CEO, BC Care Providers Association
dfontaine@bccare.ca

Lori Sidjak
Denominational Health Association
LoriSidjak@pinegroveplace.com

December 11, 2015

Dear Colleagues:

Re: Revised Wheelchair Fees Policy

As you are aware, the new policy on basic wheelchairs in publicly subsidized long-term residential care facilities will go into effect on January 1, 2016. The Ministry first committed to a review of chargeable extra fees in September of 2013, including wheelchairs. The review covered 308 publicly subsidized residential care facilities and indicated:

- Wheelchair fees are the most common non-discretionary, medically required chargeable extra in 247 of the facilities that responded. 86% of the surveyed facilities provided residents wheelchair services (purchase/ rental) either directly or through an external vendor.
- There are inconsistent practices in the charging of wheelchair fees across facilities – with a larger portion of facilities that directly provided the service free of cost.
- Facilities are inconsistent in providing information to clients on the optional nature of chargeable extras and receiving client consent for charges.
- Facilities have varied practices for situations where clients cannot afford extra fees.

The Ministry's strategic initiatives identifies the need to provide patient centred care, with frail seniors as a key target population. Given the finding of the review, combined with the mandate of patient centred care, the Ministry decided to make medically required basic wheelchairs a benefit in all publicly subsidized long-term residential care facilities in order to increase the level of fairness across the province.

The official policy communique and red-lined Home and Community Care Policy Manual (with the changes needed to formally implement the policy) will be sent to health authorities and forwarded to service providers by separate cover in the coming days.

As of January 1, 2016, regional health authorities and service providers are expected to do everything reasonable to meet the demand for basic wheelchairs. I want to assure you though that the Ministry understands that there may be a delay of up to three months for some service providers in order to conduct staff training, conduct wheelchair assessments of residential care clients, and to procure sufficient basic wheelchair inventory. During this time, I would ask health authorities to support service providers (both owned/ operated facilities and contracted facilities) with the policy implementation, including identifying interim strategies to address basic wheelchair needs until full capacity has been established (e.g. short term rentals and/or loaned basic wheelchairs from regional health authorities, etc.).

For your reference, the basic wheelchair criteria (checklist & definitions) are attached to this document and can now be circulated to service providers.

If you have any questions, please contact Ramani Kumar, Director, Ministry of Health at (250) 952-1350. Thank you for your continued support and input with respect to this policy.

Sincerely,



Doug Hughes
Assistant Deputy Minister
Health Services Policy Division
Ministry of Health

Enclosure
Basic Wheelchair Criteria (Checklist & Definitions)

Basic Wheelchair Checklist, Features Included in a Basic Wheelchair

Wheelchair Feature/Attribute	Basic Wheelchair	Modified Basic Wheelchair	Specialized Wheelchair
Light-weight frame (typically <35 lbs)	✓	✓	✓
Variable seat heights (including super low)*	✓	✓	✓
Upholstery/fabric back	✓	✓	✓
Adjustable padded arm rests	✓	✓	✓
Solid, pneumatic or semi-pneumatic rear wheels	✓	✓	✓
Front casters (any size)	✓	✓	✓
Wheel brakes with extensions as necessary	✓	✓	✓
Anti-tippers	✓	✓	✓
Swing-away foot rests	✓	✓	✓
Rear handles	✓	✓	✓
Seat belt for bus transportation	✓	✓	✓
Weight capacity up to 113.4 kg/250 lbs	✓	✓	✓
Reclining back	✗	✓	✓
Padded backs, contoured backs, supportive backs, back positioning devices, lateral back supports, lumbar supports	✗	✓	✓
Swing-away arm rests	✗	✓	✓
Lap trays (full or half), lap cushions, extended arm rests, elevating arm rests, comfort or gel arm rests, arm trays, modified arm rests, safety positioners	✗	✓	✓
Anti-roll back devices	✗	✓	✓
Articulating (i.e. elevating) foot rests	✗	✓	✓
Calf pads/supports, foot/leg troughs, footrest extenders, leg supports, leg straps, knee adductors, foot cradles, foot supports, amputee boards, toe straps	✗	✓	✓
Lap belts, safety belts, retainer straps, pelvic positioning devices, knee/thigh belts	✗	✓	✓
Chest harnesses, torso supports, posture supports,	✗	✓	✓
Head supports, neck supports	✗	✓	✓
Wheel grip covers, grip attachments	✗	✓	✓
Rear handle extensions	✗	✓	✓
Wheelchair alarms	✗	✓	✓
Oxygen holders, cane/crutch holders	✗	✓	✓
Flags, bags, drink holders, incontinence holders/bags	✗	✓	✓
Weight capacity >113.4 kg/250 lbs	✗	✗	✓
Tilt-in-space capacity	✗	✗	✓
Power mobility, accessories with electrical components	✗	✗	✓

✓ included; ✗ not included. **Note:** While each ✓ indicates included, some features may be unnecessary for a client. *Only non-permanent modifications are allowed to be made to the basic wheelchair. If permanent structural changes are required, that client does not qualify for a basic wheelchair.

Definitions

Basic contoured seat cushion: A cushion not indicated for compromised skin integrity.

Basic wheelchair: 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.

Furthermore, a basic wheelchair possesses the following attributes: light-weight frame, variable 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 not exceeding 113.4 kg/250 lbs.

Basic Cleaning: Includes disinfection and removal of visible dirt and debris (provided on an as needed basis) to preserve clinical effectiveness and resident dignity.

Basic Maintenance: Minor adjustments which do not require technical or mechanical adjustment by a wheelchair technician. Repair/ replacement of wheelchair components due to normal wear and tear must also be provided as a benefit.

Modification: Any non-permanent change to a basic wheelchair. Clients are allowed to modify their benefit basic wheelchair, at their own cost, if the modification is non-permanent. When the client no longer requires the basic wheelchair it must be returned to the service provider in its original condition so that it can be used by another client; any modifications need to be non-permanent so that the attributes of the basic wheelchair remain available for the next client who uses the wheelchair.

Personal exclusive use: Exclusive and non-restricted use by a single client.

Specialized/ Customized wheelchair: Any wheelchair not meeting the definition of a basic wheelchair. This includes bariatric wheelchairs (weight capacity greater than 113.4 kg/250 lbs.), custom-built wheelchairs, powered wheelchairs and tilt-in-space wheelchairs.

Upholstery back: A non-solid back.

Wheelchair: a device providing wheeled mobility and seating support for a person with mobility issues.