

CIHR - Questions & Answers

Q1. Why did the ministry implement a screening process for CIHR applicants? Which files are affected by the new process?

A1. Providing safe and effective services for vulnerable children continues to be a high priority for government. For this reason, the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance (MEIA) worked with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) to ensure there are proper safeguards in place for children who receive assistance through the Child in Home of a Relative (CIHR) program.

Since December 1, 2007, all new CIHR applications and those being processed need to meet the new screening requirement.

CIHR placements that existed prior to December 1, 2007 may be assessed as a separate phase after evaluation of the screening process.

Q2. Who completes the screening checks for the CIHR applicants and why?

A2. MEIA has delegated authority to MCFD to screen people to determine if they have a criminal record or prior contact with child protective services, which helps to assess the safety of a placement for a child.

MCFD staff have the experience and expertise to determine whether the screening results indicate evidence of risk to a child. For these reasons, MCFD is best positioned to screen CIHR caregivers and other persons 18 years and older in the home.

Q3. Guardian Financial Assistance (GFA) is Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC)'s equivalent to CIHR for First Nations living on reserve. Are GFA applicants also screened by MCFD?

A3. MEIA and MCFD have consulted with INAC regarding the CIHR screening and INAC communicated with First Nations to ensure that were aware of the introduction of CIHR screening as of December 1, 2007. INAC is taking steps to implement similar changes to GFA and plans to have a new screening process for GFA applicants in the future.

Q4. What is the process for screening CIHR caregivers?

A4. The relative applying for CIHR on behalf of the child provides a written consent for screening to MEIA from all persons 18 years of age and older who are living in the home. MEIA staff then fax these consents to MCFD. MCFD staff complete their screening based on a review of MCFD records and British Columbia's Correctional systems database for 56 relevant criminal offences.

Following this screening, MCFD advises MEIA by e-mail whether there is “evidence of risk that compromises the home as an appropriate place for the child” or “no evidence of risk that compromises the home as an appropriate place for the child.”

Only in cases where there is no evidence of risk that compromises the home as an appropriate place for the child and the applicant meets all other eligibility criteria, will MEIA provide CIHR assistance.

Q5. How do MEIA and MCFD staff send information to each other?

A5. MEIA staff **fax** all consent forms to the following **designated fax numbers for MCFD**:

- **Regions 1, 2 and 5:** Vancouver After Hours 604 739-3741
- **Regions 3 and 4:** New West After Hours 604 660-0238

MCFD staff e-mail the screening results, including updated results in the event a screening is reviewed and evidence of risk is identified by MCFD, to the generic e-mail address in the Global Address List for the appropriate MEIA office (for example, Employment and Income Assistance Office 106 shows the e-mail address as OFF106@gov.bc.ca). Each MEIA office is responsible to designate staff to check this e-mail account daily.

Q6. Why must applicants list all members of the household 18 years of age and older and have a screening check completed for each person?

A6. The purpose of screening every adult age 18 and over in the home is to determine if there is risk in the home that could compromise a child’s safety. If the ministry only screened the caregivers, there may still be risks that exist to the child from other adults living in the home.

Q7. What happens when a caregiver fails to provide all the required information for the application assessment?

A7. If a relative applying for CIHR assistance does not provide all the information required for the application to proceed, the worker should contact the relative to explain why that information is needed. If the required information is not received within a reasonable amount of time (usually five business days) or if the relative refuses to provide the required information, the worker makes the appropriate entries on MIS by entering the appropriate status code on the CIHR Screening Check screen and a comment on the CIHR file. The worker then closes the file and contacts the relative to advise that they are not eligible though they have the right to reconsideration.

Q8. What happens when a screening check of a new CIHR application identifies “evidence of risk that compromises the home as an appropriate place for the child?”

A8. The MEIA worker sends the relative a denial letter, which includes a condensed information screening sheet, informing them that the application they have made for CIHR assistance on behalf of the child has been denied due to evidence of risk. A reconsideration brochure accompanies the denial letter. If the relative requests further information about the denial based on the screening results, they are referred to MCFD for details. MCFD assesses the results for appropriate action.

Note: If the screening check shows evidence of risk and there are already CIHRs living in the relative's home, cheque production will be turned off and a note added to the files **of all CIHRs currently living in the home**. A denial letter will be sent for each child in the home that is no longer eligible for CIHR assistance. When closing a CIHR file based on evidence of risk, use code "CIHR Screening Not OK".

MEIA also informs relatives denied or discontinued CIHR assistance that they may contact their local MCFD district office to discuss alternative support services to assist in the plan to care for the child.

Q9. Who informs the relative applying on behalf of the child that they are not eligible for CIHR?

A9. If a CIHR application is denied for any reason, the MEIA worker provides a denial letter to the relative who applied on the child's behalf. (The appropriate denial letter is used based on reason for denial). The letter selected indicates the reasons why they are not eligible for CIHR, and if applicable, includes an MCFD contact number the relative may call for more information. MEIA also advises the relative that they may wish to contact their local MCFD district office to discuss alternative support services.

Q10. Is a CIHR application decision open to reconsideration or appeal?

A10. All CIHR denials and discontinuances are open to reconsideration, including those based on MCFD's screening for evidence of risk. At reconsideration, MEIA will make a new CIHR eligibility decision based on the eligibility criteria for CIHR, including the results of MCFD's screening. MEIA has no authority to change the results of MCFD's screening.

Whenever CIHR assistance is denied due to evidence of risk, including the decision at reconsideration, the relative must be advised that if they disagree with or have questions about the screening findings, they must contact MCFD directly.

The tribunal has exclusive jurisdiction to determine appealability, however, the ministry's position is that, pursuant to the regulation, a decision to deny or discontinue CIHR based on evidence of risk is not appealable to the tribunal. A denial or discontinuance for any other reason can be appealed.

Q11. What happens if the relative disagrees with or has questions about the screening?

A11. MEIA refers the relative to the **MCFD After Hours Office** in their region. The contact **phone numbers** are as follows:

Vancouver After Hours - Vancouver /Coastal, Vancouver Island and North Regions **(Regions 1, 2, and 5)**

Local 604 660 4927 or Toll Free 1 800 663 9122

New West After Hours - Fraser and Interior Regions **(Regions 3 and 4)**

Local 604 660 8180 or Toll Free 1 866 230 8180

If MCFD determines that an error was made in applying the screening criteria to the CIHR applicant, the MCFD After Hours worker will advise MEIA through the generic e-mail address at the appropriate MEIA office if a change in outcome is determined. Each MEIA office is responsible to designate staff to check this e-mail account daily.

Q12. If there are more than two adults in the home and the screening indicates there is evidence of risk to the child, how does the caregiver know which adult is creating the risk?

A12. In accordance with Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) legislation, the ministry cannot identify the adult who shows evidence of risk. However, the caregiver will receive a list of risk criteria. The caregiver will need to discuss this issue with each adult residing in the home.

Q13. How can the ministry monitor if another adult has moved into the home of a caregiver whom MCFD has already screened?

A13. CIHR caregivers who have been screened by MCFD are required to report on their EIA0081 stub if a dependent child living in the CIHR home turns 18 or if any additional person age 18 and over moves into their home. This obligation to report rests with the caregivers and not with the ministry.

The 18 year old dependent or new person must be screened by MCFD. If the person refuses to consent to the screening or the screening shows evidence of risk to the child or children, the ministry will close the files of all children receiving CIHR assistance who are living in the home. The CIHR cheque will be held until the completed consent form is received by the ministry

Q14. If the child's CIHR caregiver changes and then the child returns to the caregiver who was previously screened, is re-screening required?

A14. Yes. Regardless of the duration of the placement, the CIHR caregiver and all persons age 18 and over living in their home must be screened again.

Q15. If another child moves into a home where there are other children who already receive CIHR assistance, do the adults in the home need to be screened again?

A15. Yes. All adults in the home must be screened for each new CIHR application.

Q16. Should staff list all screened individuals separately on MIS?

A16. No. MIS will indicate the application status as a whole. If consent for screening forms for all adults in the home have been submitted by the relative applying for CIHR and then faxed to MCFD, MEIA staff should update the file on MIS to indicate the CIHR screening is "in progress".

Q17. Should MEIA conduct annual eligibility reviews on existing CIHR files?

A17. No. Eligibility reviews should not be conducted on files that were in receipt of CIHR assistance after the new screening process commences. Once MEIA and MCFD evaluate the effectiveness of the screening process, the ministries will determine when to begin eligibility reviews on the pre-existing CIHR placements.

Reporting Child Protection Concerns

Q18. If there was evidence of risk, will MCFD be doing a child protection investigation? In addition, what should staff do in cases where a CIHR is being denied due to evidence of risk and staff are concerned about the child's well-being, such as the parent is in jail, the parent cannot be located, etcetera?

A18. When there is evidence of risk, MCFD will only proceed with a child protection investigation when warranted by the evidence. MEIA will be advised only that there was evidence of risk, not what the evidence was or what action MCFD will take.

Any time staff have reason to believe that a child has been, or is likely to be, abused or neglected, they are required to report the matter promptly to a Ministry of Children and Family Development child protection social worker. A staff member who is unsure about whether to report can discuss his or her concerns with their supervisor, or call an MCFD child protection worker to discuss. MCFD will assess the matter to determine if there are protection concerns.