

What is the BC Children and Youth Disability Benefit?



Purpose

The BC Children and Youth Disability Benefit (The Disability Benefit) is a **non-income-tested direct funding benefit** for children and youth up to age 19 with a long-term disability resulting in significant and/or complex support needs.

Funding is **tiered** based on complexity of need:

- Base tier (\$6,500/year)
- Higher tier (\$17,000/year), determined through support planning

Benefit level determinations will be made using consistent, province-wide criteria, developed in partnership with child development professionals and shared transparently with families and service providers.

Eligibility

A child or youth is eligible for **the Disability Benefit** if they have:

- A long-term disability that results in significant and complex developmental support needs, based on diagnosis and/or functional impact.

Two Eligibility Pathways

1. Direct Admit Pathway

Children who automatically qualify include, but are not limited to, those with:

- Moderate to profound intellectual disability
- Medically and neurodevelopmentally complex children with genetically tested and/or clinically defined syndromic disorders associated with highest needs – including Down Syndrome, Angelman Syndrome, and others
- Concurrent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and intellectual disability
- Autism with the most significant and pervasive needs, including those with:
 - Profound Autism
 - DSM-5 Level 3 Autism
 - Autism (any level) AND intellectual disability (any level)
 - Eligibility for the At Home Program
 - Concurrent autism (any level) and one of the following:
- Bipolar Affective Disorder (BAD)
- Psychosis and Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders

- › Catatonia
- › Severe self-injurious behaviour (SIB) assessed and treated through BC Children’s Hospital neuropsychiatry and/or the SIB Clinic at the Pacific Autism Family Network
- › Degenerative conditions with predictable decline (e.g., Duchenne muscular dystrophy, SMA types 1 & 2 etc.)
- › Palliative conditions (life expectancy ≤ 6 months)
- › Children whose gross motor function is similar to a child with cerebral palsy classified at GMFCS level 3-5
- › Children participating in or eligible for the current At Home Program

This pathway prioritizes **early certainty for families**.

2. Needs Based Review Pathway

A child may not meet a single diagnostic threshold, but has a **constellation of needs** that, taken together, warrant access. For children who do not meet a direct-admit pathway but still have **severe functional impacts**, eligibility may be established through:

- › A professionally administered functional assessment
- › Health-care provider attestation confirming prolonged disability and significant adaptive limitations
- › Consideration of medical and functional complexity, behavioural profile, and real-world functional impact

This pathway ensures children with **rare, complex, or atypical presentations** are not excluded and that clinical expertise is applied to determine eligibility based on functional impact, not just diagnostic labels.

What can the Disability Benefit be used for?

The Disability Benefit funding must be used for **disability-related supports that improve a child’s functioning and daily life**. Uses are guided by an approved Support Plan.

Examples of what families can use it for:

- › Therapies and interventions (e.g., behavioural, speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, mental health supports)
- › Respite
- › Inclusion supports (childcare or recreation)
- › Assistive and communication devices
- › Certain medical travel costs
- › Training related to the child’s support needs
- › Inclusive recreation programs
- › Some diagnostics or assessments (e.g., testing outside of MSP funding, examples include but are not limited to genetics, imaging, visual, auditory, dental, psychoeducational)

How do families get the Disability Benefit money?

Once a child is confirmed eligible:

1. **The family works with a Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) worker or other professional to develop a Support Plan**

2. The plan confirms:

- › Functional goals
- › Types of supports
- › Funding amount

3. Families then choose how their money is shared and spent.

Three Pathways to manage the Disability Benefit

Families will be able to choose how they want to receive and manage their Disability Benefit, with three flexible pathways. These pathways are designed to give families choice while ensuring that funding is used for disability-related supports. Families can use one pathway or combine them.

Direct Payment Pathway

Families receive lump sum payments directly and are responsible for coordinating and directly paying service providers they hire.

Under this pathway:

- › Family creates a support plan with professionals of their choice
- › Family hires and coordinates providers directly
- › Family manages as employer

Best for: Families who prefer to manage services themselves and want flexibility and feel confident in managing as an 'employer' including processing of federal government tax remittances.

Invoicing Pathway

This pathway works much like the current Autism Funding model. Families choose providers but do not need to manage funding or invoicing directly.

Under this pathway:

- › Family develops a support plan with a health professional
- › Family selects service providers
- › Providers directly invoice the Ministry

Best for: Families who want flexibility in provider choice with much less administrative work.

Authorized Agency Coordinated Pathway

Families can choose a local pre-approved community-based early intervention provider (e.g. Child Development Centre) to coordinate and deliver supports on their behalf.

Under this pathway:

- › Families identify the organization they have chosen to work with
- › Agency receives the funding from the Ministry – in full or in part
- › Agency plans with the family, delivers, and coordinates services
- › Agency is responsible for all billing and record keeping, hiring staff, providing and monitoring services, and managing payroll.

Best for: Families stay in charge of deciding what supports their child needs, while spending less time on paperwork, hiring providers, and managing funding.

The Disability Benefit is part of a broader provincial effort to strengthen and improve supports for children with disabilities across B.C.



We want all children and youth to have access to the supports they need to live full, happy lives. Over the past two years, we've worked closely with families, service providers, and advocates across B.C. to understand what isn't working and how to do better. Families told us clearly that too many children aren't getting the help they need, that support doesn't match the level of need, and that the system is too complex and stressful to navigate.

We listened—and we're taking action.

With a major new investment over the next three years, B.C. is expanding and strengthening supports for children and youth with support needs. These changes are about putting more support into families' hands, expanding free community services, and making the system easier to understand and use.

B.C. will deliver:

- More investment in children with disabilities than ever before
- More support for children and youth with the highest levels of need
- Additional help for middle and low-income families
- Expanded eligibility so more children qualify across more disabilities
- A simpler system that is easier and less stressful to navigate
- Continued family choice in how supports are accessed
- Expanded and better-connected services so the system works together more effectively



**Children and Youth with
Support Need Services**

For more information and resources:
gov.bc.ca/ChildYouthSupports