



The Advocacy Centre

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Dear Doctor:

Re: Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Application

Your patient is applying for the provincial Persons with Disabilities income assistance from the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR). A physician or nurse practitioner must fill out the second part of the application. The third, or Assessor, part of the form can also be filled out by a physician, or by other prescribed and registered professionals. These include psychologists, RNs and nurse practitioners, occupational or physical therapists, chiropractors, and registered social workers.

We hope this letter will make it easier for you to fill out the application with your patient. In drawing up the following suggestions, we bear in mind that doctors are busy so we have highlighted the crucial parts of the application.

Criteria

- The PWD application is about whether the applicant needs significant assistance with daily living activities, and not about whether he or she can work or be employed.
- To be eligible, an applicant must have “a severe mental or physical impairment” that will last at least two years.
- We recommend listing all diagnoses that cause or contribute to the impairment
- We also recommend literally using the word “severe” in your summary, if appropriate, and referencing specific restrictions or impairments that limit day-to-day activities.

Conditions that Vary

- Many people have symptoms that vary in intensity from day-to-day, often unpredictably, or following exertion. The application form is not designed to indicate this. It is therefore important to not only focus on the applicant’s best days, but to note the range of variable abilities by using the spaces provided for comments. This will more accurately reflect the applicant’s state.
- For conditions that vary from day-to-day, please specify, to the extent possible, the frequency and duration of the most difficult days.

Independent vs. Continuous or Periodic Assistance

- The Act says the patient must *need* assistance with daily living activities. The patient does not necessarily have to be *receiving* assistance in order to qualify. People who do things on their own, significantly slower, or who simply do not get things done, will not be denied because they don't actually have help. It is helpful to explain their limitations on the form.
- This assistance can take many forms, and need not always be physical assistance. For example, someone who is physically able to do laundry or housework, but who needs to be reminded to do those activities for developmental or mental health reasons, is not "independent" with respect to those activities.
- Assistance can also come from an assistance device such as a walker or a breathing device.
- Please note: where your patient has difficulty with certain tasks but does not have help, the taking "significantly longer" column will be more appropriate than the "independent" column. MSDPR will interpret "independent" as the equivalent of "not disabled."
- According to MSDPR, periodic assistance is defined as "the need for significant help for an activity some of the time as would be the case where a person required help due to the episodic nature of the impairment." And continuous assistance is defined as "needing significant help most or all of the time for an activity."

Thank you for your assistance and please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you have any questions or concerns.

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