



## Persons with Persistent and Multiple Barriers to Employment (PPMB) Application Guide

**D**isability Alliance BC's Advocacy Access Program helps people with disabilities to apply for benefits, services and programs.

Advocates can use this Guide to help their clients qualify for the Persons with Persistent and Multiple Barriers to Employment Benefit (PPMB). We have also written this Guide to help people with disabilities who want to apply for this benefit on their own.

In this Guide, we describe in detail some of the most important parts of the application process. Taking special care with these steps can mean the difference between an application being accepted or denied. We hope that you will find this information helpful.

PPMB is a provincial benefit that is provided by the *Employment and Assistance (EA) Act* regulations. The benefit is administered by the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation (MSDSI or the Ministry).

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The information in this Guide is based on the legislation and policy that was current at the time of writing. The legislation and policy are subject to change. Please check the date on this page.

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## Qualifying for PPMB

The Ministry of Social Development and Social Development (MSDSI) regional office decides if an applicant qualifies for the benefit based on these three documents:

- the PPMB *Employability Screen*
- information provided by a doctor in the PPMB *Medical Report*

We have included samples of these documents in the Appendices of this Guide.



**To qualify for PPMB, applicants must meet the eligibility criteria set out in Section 2 of the *Employment and Assistance (EA) Act* Regulations. An overview of these requirements are given in the section below. If you would like to see the exact wording of the legislation, please see the Appendices in this Guide.**

To qualify for PPMB:

- Applicants must have been receiving income assistance for 12 out of the previous 15 months immediately before they apply for PPMB.
- A doctor must say that the applicant's medical condition "seriously impedes" or "precludes" the person from looking for, accepting or continuing employment.
- A doctor must say that the applicant has a medical condition that has lasted for at least one year, or has occurred frequently in the past year, and is likely to continue or reoccur for at least two more years.



**Addictions of any kind do not count as an eligible medical condition under the PPMB legislation.**

## Getting Started

### PPMB Applicants with an Open File at the Ministry

To apply for PPMB, applicants need to contact the Ministry and say they want to apply for PPMB.

### PPMB Applications for People Who Are Not Receiving Income Assistance

Most people who are not on income assistance cannot qualify for PPMB because they have not received income assistance for 12 months; however, there are two exceptions:

- A person may have been off basic assistance for one – three months; they can still meet the requirement of being on benefits for 12 out of 15 months.
- A person who has already been granted PPMB, but had their file closed, can be reassessed for PPMB if they re-apply within 12 months of leaving PPMB.

## The PPMB Application Process

The information in a person's *Employability Screen* and *Medical Report* are all used to decide whether or not the person qualifies for PPMB. It is important to know how the information in these two parts affect each other.

### Employability Screen Interview

Applicants are contacted by a Ministry worker to conduct an employability interview. The interview questions are about the applicant's work history, level of education and English language skills. They are intended to help the Ministry identify a person's barriers to employment. Points are scored on an Employment Screen based on the answers. If someone scores 15 points or more, then their medical restrictions to work do not have to be as great as a person who scores less than 15.

According to the Ministry's regulation, when the person's score is less than 15, they must have a medical condition which **precludes** their ability to pursue employment. If the applicant scores 15 or more, they must have a medical condition which **seriously impedes** their ability to work. For someone scoring over 15, the Ministry must also be satisfied that reasonable steps have been taken to overcome the barriers to employment. For example, if a person's literacy is a barrier to work, the Ministry will expect ESL classes to be taken as a "reasonable step." It should be noted that most people do not score 15 or more on the *Employability Screen*.

<b>Employability Screen Score</b>	
Less than 15	person's medical condition must <b>preclude</b> their ability to work
More than 15	person's medical condition must <b>seriously impede</b> their ability to work, and reasonable steps must be taken to overcome barriers to employment.

## Medical Report

The worker will then give the applicant a *Medical Report* to take to their doctor.

**The information provided on the *Medical Report* is crucial to the application—it determines whether or not most people qualify for PPMB.**

So, it is important that the doctor is well informed on all the person's medical conditions and how they may restrict the person's ability to work. If the person has more than one doctor, they should take the report to the doctor who knows their health restrictions best. The provincial government pays the doctor for completing the report.

### A. Personal Information

In this section, the applicant provides their name and contact information, including their Personal Health (Care Card) Number.

### B. Authority to Release Information

Section B is signed by the applicant. This section gives the doctor permission to complete the *Medical Report* and give the person's medical information to MSDSI.

### C. Medical Assessment

This important section is completed by the applicant's doctor.

#### 1. Medical Condition

a. and b.: The doctor is asked to list the applicant's primary and secondary medical conditions and the dates of onset. He or she should provide a list of all medical conditions. Please note that addictions are not defined as medical conditions in the PPMB legislation.

c.: The doctor is asked to list the treatment approaches that have been tried (for example, medications, therapies or surgeries) and what the outcomes of these treatments have been. It is helpful if the doctor notes if there has been no significant improvement as a result of treatment.

d.: The doctor is asked how long the condition has existed. To qualify for PPMB, the doctor's response must be that the condition has lasted for one year.

## 2. Prognosis

a.: The doctor is asked how long the applicant's medical condition is expected to continue. The response must be "more than two years."

b.: If a person's medical condition is not continuous, it must have occurred frequently in the past year and be likely to continue for at least two more years. The applicant should provide information to the doctor about how often their condition has affected them in the past.

## 3. Restrictions

The doctor is asked to describe the applicant's restrictions to employment. The applicant should make sure that the doctor understands all the problems that he/she has experienced in trying to get or keep work. Specific details about the person's limitations are important. If he/she is unable to work, it is helpful if the doctor writes this in this section.

## 4. Additional Information

It is not necessary to include additional information, but it is helpful if the doctor includes tests or reports that show the severity of the applicant's medical condition(s).

## 5. Certification

The doctor must sign and stamp the report and say how long he/she has known the applicant.

### Tips for the Medical Assessment

**It is important that the doctor complete the assessment from a "real world" point of view.**

This means the person must be employable in reality, not in theory. The doctor needs to consider how a "real" employer would evaluate the applicant if they applied for a "real" job. Looking at employment in this way, a person may be considered unemployable if no one would hire them in the real world.

The same is true about training. It may be unrealistic to expect someone over 56 to train for office work if they have spent their working life as a labourer. In the real world, are they likely to be hired for this kind of work? If not, the doctor should understand that the applicant is unemployable and put this on the form.

The applicant may want to take a letter to their doctor explaining the information that will be helpful in their application. Please see the Appendices of this Guide for a letter that applicants can copy and take to their doctor, or use to write their own letter.

## Submitting the PPMB Medical Report

Here are the steps to submitting the *Medical Report*.

- 1** When the doctor has completed the *Medical Report*, he or she should return it to the applicant.
- 2** The applicant should review it to make sure that the information is accurate and complete.
- 3** The *Medical Report* must then be given to MSDSI office, where it is date-stamped when the Report is received.
- 4** The applicant should keep a photocopy of the completed date-stamped Medical report for their records.



## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. What are some of the benefits of receiving PPMB?**

A. A single person with no dependents may receive up to \$657.92 per month. PPMB recipients are also eligible for enhanced health supplements and an earnings exemption of \$500.

**Q. How long will PPMB last?**

A. The Ministry asks people to re-apply for PPMB every two years. PPMB is not granted automatically on re-application. MSDSI can discontinue PPMB benefits if they think the person has become capable of work or training. Therefore, people who are re-applying must make sure that their doctor provides details on the *Medical Report* about how they are still restricted in employment activities.

**Q. If the applicant can work a little, can they still qualify for PPMB?**

A. Yes, if the applicant is capable of occasional work, for example, a few hours per month. However, the doctor may need to explain that the person's medical condition prevents them from working for more than a few hours now and then.

**Q. Once a person qualifies for PPMB can they earn money?**

A. PPMB recipients are allowed an earnings exemption of \$500 per month. It should be noted, however, that the Ministry may use this information as evidence of "employability" when the person re-applies for PPMB.

**Q. How long does it take for MSDSI to process PPMB applications?**

A. It usually takes three to four weeks to receive a response from MSDSI.

**Q. Will being involved in a pre-employment program mean that a person will be denied PPMB?**

A. Engaging in pre-employment activities does not necessarily disqualify a person from PPMB, as a medical condition may still prevent someone from continuing in employment in the "real world."





## Resources for Appealing the Denial of PPMB

If a person's PPMB application is denied, the decision can be appealed. A Request for Reconsideration must be filed with MSDSI within 20 business days from the date the applicant receives their denial letter. For more information on how to appeal, please see the following DABC publications.

### Appeal Guides

- *Appeal Guide—Persons with Persistent and Multiple Barriers to Employment (PPMB) Part One: The Request for Reconsideration*
- *Appeal Guide—Persons with Persistent and Multiple Barriers to Employment (PPMB) Part Two: The Appeal Tribunal*

### Help Sheets

- *Help Sheet 11A—Appealing Denial of the Persons with Persistent and Multiple Barriers to Employment (PPMB) Benefit: The Reconsideration Request*
- *Help Sheet 11B—Appealing Denial of the Persons with Persistent and Multiple Barriers to Employment (PPMB) Benefit: The Appeal Tribunal*
- *Help Sheet 12—Income Assistance Application Process for People with Disabilities*

All our publications are available on the DABC website at [www.disabilityalliancebc.org](http://www.disabilityalliancebc.org). The website has a series of Help Sheets and Guides on disability benefits.

### On-Line Resources

For various community resources, go to [www.povnet.org](http://www.povnet.org).

*Your Welfare Rights: A Guide to BC Employment and Assistance* can be found on the Legal Services Society website at [www.lss.bc.ca](http://www.lss.bc.ca), under publications.

For information on MHSD policy, programs and services, the Online Resource serves as the public entry point [www.gov.bc.ca/meia/online\\_resource](http://www.gov.bc.ca/meia/online_resource).

You can see BC's income assistance acts and regulations at [www.eia.gov.bc.ca/ministry/leg.htm](http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/ministry/leg.htm).

## Appendices

### Letter to Doctors

Dear Doctor:

In order for your patient to qualify for the Persons with Persistent and Multiple Barriers to Employment (PPMB) benefit, their doctor must complete the PPMB *Medical Report*. The PPMB benefit provides approximately \$50 a month more than basic income assistance. PPMB recipients are also eligible for certain health supplements, and may earn up to \$500 a month without it decreasing their benefits. So, there are real advantages for your patient if they can qualify for PPMB. It should be noted that your patient will usually be asked to re-apply for PPMB every 2 years.

To qualify for PPMB, the applicant's doctor must show that the applicant's medical condition:

- stops them from looking for, accepting or continuing employment, and
- has lasted for at least one year, or has occurred frequently in the past year, and is likely to continue or reoccur for at least two more years.

Addictions of any kind do not count as an eligible medical condition under the PPMB rules.

We respectfully ask that you complete the *Medical Report*. To assist you and your patient, we have written a brief guide to some questions in the Report that we believe require particular attention.

#### 1. Medical Condition

Please list all medical conditions under a. and b. in the *Medical Report*. Part c. asks for a list of all treatments that have been tried and whether they have been effective. Under Part d., a medical condition must have lasted for at least one year for the applicant to qualify for PPMB.

#### 2. Prognosis

The duration requirement for PPMB is that a medical condition must be expected to continue for "more than two years."

#### 3. Restrictions

It is important that you provide details about how each of your patient's medical conditions restricts them from an employment perspective. It is helpful if you state that your patient is unable to do any kind of work as a direct result of these health restrictions. Please evaluate the applicant's ability to work from a "real world" perspective. A 60-year-old man, for example, who has a limited education and is no longer able to work as a labourer is extremely unlikely to be able to pursue a job as an office worker.

#### 4. Additional Information

Please include any reports or consultations that shed light on the severity of your patient's impairment.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this *Medical Report*.

**Sincerely,**

## PPMB Definition

### Persons With Persistent & Multiple Barriers to Employment (PPMB)

2 (1) To qualify as a person who has persistent multiple barriers to employment, a person must meet the requirements set out in

- (a) subsection (2), and
- (b) subsection (3) or (4).

(2) The person has been a recipient for at least 12 of the immediately preceding 15 calendar months of one or more of the following:

- (a) income assistance or hardship assistance under the Act, (b) income assistance, hardship assistance or a youth allowance under a former Act, (c) a disability allowance under the Disability Benefits Program Act, or (d) disability assistance or hardship assistance under the Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act.

(3) The following requirements apply

(a) the minister

- (i) has determined that the person scores at least 15 on the employability screen set out in Schedule E, and (ii) based on the result of that employability screen, considers that the person has barriers that seriously impede the person's ability to search for, accept or continue in employment,

(b) the person has a medical condition, other than an addiction, that is confirmed by a medical practitioner and that,

(i) in the opinion of the medical practitioner,

(A) has continued for at least one year and is likely to continue for at least 2 more years, or

(B) has occurred frequently in the past year and is likely to continue for at least 2 more years, and

(ii) in the opinion of the minister, is a barrier that seriously impedes the person's ability to search for, accept or continue in employment, and

(c) the person has taken all steps that the minister considers reasonable for the person to overcome the barriers referred to in paragraph (a).

(4) The person has a medical condition, other than an addiction, that is confirmed by a medical practitioner and that,

(a) in the opinion of the medical practitioner,

(i) has continued for at least 1 year and is likely to continue for at least 2 more years, or

(ii) has occurred frequently in the past year and is likely to continue for at least 2 more years, and

(b) in the opinion of the minister, is a barrier that precludes the person from searching for, accepting or continuing in employment. (B.C. Reg. 263/2002)