

Rural Areas/Moving to B.C.

SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS

Medical Services in B.C. are organized into five regions:

- Vancouver Coastal (based in Vancouver)
- Vancouver Island (based in Victoria)
- Fraser (based in Surrey)
- Interior (based in Kelowna)
- Northern (based in Prince George)

It's important to know which region you're in. If you're not sure, look in the blue pages of your phone directory under "Health Authorities."

If you are having trouble finding the phone number you need, or you can't afford long distance charges, call Service BC at 1-800-663-7867. They will help you contact the program you need, at no charge.

Government Agents (now called Service BC) are also located in many small towns and can be helpful. These offices have forms for many B.C. government services, and will take registrations for the Medical Services Plan (MSP). If you file a form at the Service BC office, you can get a stamped receipt for your records. To find the nearest office, look in the blue pages of the phone directory under "Service BC" or visit the Service BC website.

Finally, if you have tried everything and you still can't get the health services that

you need, contact your Member of the Legislative Assembly (your provincial elected representative). Your MLA's office has information on government programs and can advocate on your behalf.

Travelling to get Medical Care

Most small towns and rural areas in B.C. do not have specialists to diagnose dementia. Getting a diagnosis or specialized medical care may mean travelling into a city such as Vancouver, Victoria, Prince George or Kelowna. Unfortunately, people have to make their own travel arrangements and pay for most of the costs, such as accommodation.

Some assistance is provided by the BC Travel Assistance Program (TAP) which provides free travel on BC Ferries and discounts on some railways or airlines. Your family doctor must fill out the TAP form, and you must have the TAP number when you make a reservation. For BC Ferries southern routes, you simply arrive one hour early for the sailing and present your form. TAP will also pay for an escort if your

This is one of 10 **Advocacy Fact Sheets** prepared by the Alzheimer Society of B.C. These fact sheets offer tips on advocating for a family member with dementia. We suggest you read through the series, and then use the resources provided to find more specific information.

relative is incapable of travelling alone for “medical reasons” (e.g. dementia). TAP forms are also available from hospital social workers and specialty clinics.

Keep all your travel and accommodation receipts. You can claim medical travel expenses on your income tax return.

MOVING FAMILY TO B.C. FROM ANOTHER PROVINCE

Many older people decide to move to be close to adult children or other family members, especially when they are having health problems. If you intend to help your relative move to B.C., make sure you plan well ahead. It is particularly important that your family member establish a B.C. address right away.

People must be residents of B.C. for three months before they can be covered by the Medical Services Plan of B.C. In the meantime, they must keep up coverage in the province they moved from. The three month residency requirement also applies to qualifying for subsidized long-term care and other services.

Be sure to review any legal documents your family member has. Documents that were made in other provinces are not always recognized in B.C. For example, powers of attorney, wills, and advance directives from outside B.C. may not meet B.C. requirements.

If you have an enduring power of attorney from out of province, be sure to check that it is valid here, especially if you might have to deal with real estate. Committeeship orders are not “portable” and must be re-applied for in British Columbia.

Self-help tools for making your own documents such as representation agreements, enduring powers of attorney, and living wills are available from the Nidus Personal Planning Resource Centre and Registry (see link below).

RESOURCES

BC Travel Assistance Program (TAP) - www.health.gov.bc.ca/tapbc.

Medical Services Plan - Eligibility and Enrollment - www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp.

Service BC 1-800-663-7867
www.servicebc.gov.bc.ca.

Government Agents - Call Service BC (above) or visit www.servicebc.gov.bc.ca.

Your MLA's Office - To locate your MLA's office call Service BC, or look up the “MLA Finder” at www.leg.bc.ca.

Nidus: Personal Planning Resources for legal and health care matters - www.nidus.ca.

Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia - www.trustee.bc.ca.

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