

Vehicle Modification

BRANCH/DIVISION:

Children's disABILITY Services/
Community Service Delivery

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY:

Assistant Deputy Minister, Community Service Delivery
Department of Families

POLICY OWNER:

Director, Children's disABILITY Services

DATE APPROVED

June 2019

APPLICABLE TO

Children's disABILITY Services/
Disability Health Supports Unit

NEXT REVIEW DATE

DATE REVIEWED:

April 2019

DATE REVISED

April 2019

1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Children's disABILITY Services supports families raising children with developmental or lifelong physical disabilities, to meet the additional disability-related needs they may have.

2.0 BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Children enrolled with the Children's disABILITY Services program who require a mobility aid may receive eligible vehicle modification support based on their assessed disability-related needs.

3.0 PURPOSE

Children's disABILITY Services funds vehicle modifications to provide an accessible transportation option so children with disabilities have improved access to their community. Approved funding is provided directly to a qualified mobility equipment vendor towards the cost of eligible accessibility modifications to a vehicle.

Eligibility for Children's disABILITY Services does not mean that all vehicle modification requests will be approved; requests are subject to the eligibility criteria outlined in this policy and the availability of program resources.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

ASSESSMENT OFFICER – Disability and Health Supports Unit (DHSU) staff person responsible for assessing, reviewing, prioritizing and processing vehicle modification requests on behalf of Children's disABILITY Services.

COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATION – Non-government organization such as a charitable foundation that may fund vehicle modification supports for children with disabilities.

DISABILITY AND HEALTH SUPPORTS UNIT – Unit responsible for assessing and processing all vehicle modification requests for children enrolled in the Children's disABILITY Services Program.

QUALIFIED MOBILITY EQUIPMENT VENDOR – Mobility equipment retail, installation and servicing organization accredited by the National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association and/or the Transport Canada safety mark.

QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL – For the purposes of this policy, qualified professionals include occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

5.0 POLICY

5.1 ELIGIBLE MODIFICATIONS

Supported eligible vehicle modifications must meet the assessed mobility needs of the child with the disability and must be recommended by a qualified professional.

Some examples of eligible vehicle modifications are:

- Wheelchair lifts and ramps
- Roof, floor and door alterations
- Wheelchair restraint systems and tie downs
- Vehicle transfer seat
- Boom lifts

5.2 INELIGIBLE MODIFICATIONS

Ineligible modifications include:

- modifications not related to accessibility
- modifications not related to the child's disability
- modifications of an aesthetic or convenient nature
- modifications to vehicles not owned by the family or an immediate family member
- modifications to more than one vehicle per household

Children's disABILITY Services does **not** provide funding for:

- purchases carried out prior to written approval by the DHSU
- the purchase of a vehicle (funding for the purchase of a modified vehicle must be applied only to the assessed value of the modification)
- operating or maintenance costs of the modified vehicle
- non-disability related improvements to the vehicle required so that the vehicle can be further modified or converted
- vehicle repairs
- optional vehicle features (e.g., air conditioning, lighting etc.)
- shipping costs, sales and other taxes, vehicle registration fees and vendor administrative fees

5.3 RECOMMENDATION BY QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL

A request for vehicle modification requires an assessment and recommendation in writing by a qualified professional. The requested vehicle modification must be related to the child's disability, and must meet the mobility needs of a child who uses a mobility base in a basic and adequate way.

A qualified professional includes an occupational therapist or physiotherapist qualified to make the recommendation.

5.4 DEFINING "BASIC AND ADEQUATE" SUPPORT

Children's disABILITY Services provides basic and adequate support to assist families with some of the extraordinary costs of raising children with disabilities.

"Basic and adequate" means the minimum required to meet the assessed disability-related need in a satisfactory manner. The assessed need addresses the functional limitations caused by the child's disability.

Determining what is "basic and adequate" depends on context. It does not mean that the lowest priced modification or the cheapest option is inevitably chosen. The decision making focus is on sufficiently meeting the family's assessed needs, as they relate to the child's disability.

Choices of an aesthetic or a convenient nature that raise the price of the modification with no demonstrable benefit in addressing the child's functional limitations do not fall within the definition of "basic and adequate".

5.4.1 BASIC AND ADEQUATE VAN CONVERSIONS

The basic and adequate van conversion is a rear-entry manual modification. Funding for side-entry or power modifications will only be approved in exceptional circumstances for assessed health and mobility reasons, as documented by a qualified professional.

5.5 ELIGIBLE VEHICLE

Not all vehicles can be safely modified. A qualified mobility equipment vendor can assist by recommending suitable vehicle options to meet the family's mobility needs.

In compliance with Transport Canada's requirements, vehicles must not be more than three (3) years old and must have fewer than 60,000 km to be eligible for a Children's disABILITY Services funded modification.

Children's disABILITY Services will only fund eligible modifications to one vehicle per household. Either the family or an immediate family member (e.g. grandparents, uncle or aunt) must own the vehicle. Leased or rental vehicles are not eligible for funded vehicle modifications.

Where parents share joint custody of the child and each parent owns a vehicle used for transporting the child with a disability, the qualified professional and DHSU will work with the family to determine whether modifications are required to both vehicles. Factors to consider include the amount of time the vehicle is used to transport the child, alternative arrangements that can be made, whether portable vehicle modifications can be used, available program resources, and what supports the family can provide.

5.6 SUPPORT FOR THE PURCHASE OF A PREVIOUSLY MODIFIED VEHICLE

Children's disABILITY Services may provide support, up to the cost of an assessed basic and adequate vehicle modification, toward the purchase of a modified vehicle. For pre-owned vehicles, Children's disABILITY Services' contribution will be equal to the value of the modification after depreciation is considered, as assessed by a qualified mobility equipment vendor.

In order for the DHSU to approve funding toward such an agreement, all of the following conditions must be met:

- the family receive a letter of approval from the DHSU and sign a funding agreement with the DHSU prior to purchasing the vehicle. Families will not be compensated for vehicles purchased prior to DHSU approval;
- the sale must be facilitated by a qualified mobility equipment vendor;
- the vehicle be no more than three years old with fewer than 60,000 km;
- the vehicle have a clear collision report respecting the frame;
- the modifications made to the vehicle meet the long-term mobility needs of the child, as assessed by the qualified professional; and
- the family provide the vehicle's bill of sale to the DHSU upon request in order to receive reimbursement as laid out in the funding agreement.

6.0 CORE SUPPORTING STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

6.1 COMMUNICATION FROM THE DHSU

Upon receipt of a request from a qualified professional, the DHSU will send an acknowledgement letter to the family confirming the request is under assessment, and informing the family of any expected timelines involved in accessing supports.

The DHSU Assessment Officer will assess each request and determine whether the request is eligible for funding, and, if so, will determine the priority level of the request. When assessing a request the DHSU will consider whether there are lower cost alternatives that can meet the mobility needs of the child and family (e.g., accessible public transit or equipment that will meet the child's mobility needs). In order to support the assessment, the Assessment Officer may seek further information from the qualified professional, other service providers, the family or the mobility equipment vendor.

The DHSU will notify the family once a decision has been made regarding the request. If the request is approved, the DHSU will send the family an approval letter with instructions on next steps to access approved vehicle modification support.

6.2 DHSU FUNDS VENDOR FOR VEHICLE MODIFICATIONS

Once families are approved for vehicle modification support, the DHSU will communicate to the family next steps in procuring the modification. Families will be asked to choose a qualified mobility equipment vendor accredited by the National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association and/or the Transport Canada safety mark and to set up an appointment for the approved modification work.

The DHSU provides funds directly to the qualified mobility equipment vendor and does not provide direct payment to families. The purchase of a previously modified vehicle must be facilitated by a qualified mobility equipment vendor. The vendor will provide training on proper use of the mobility equipment, as well as information on warranties, maintenance and inspections.

6.3 FAMILY FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS FUNDING A VEHICLE MODIFICATION

Financial contribution by the family towards the funding of a vehicle modification is not required. Within available program resources, Children's disABILITY Services provides basic and adequate support to modify the family vehicle. While financial contribution is not required, families are encouraged to use their private insurance to cover the cost of the modification.

If a family wishes to upgrade or enhance the modifications beyond the assessed basic and adequate level, the family is responsible for the difference between the basic and adequate cost and the upgrade or enhancement. The family must sign a funding agreement prior to entering into such an arrangement.

In order to qualify for Children's disABILITY Services funding, any enhancements chosen by the family must be consistent with the assessment and recommendations of the qualified professional.

6.4 FUNDING AGREEMENT

A funding agreement will be required in order to outline details of the funding arrangement among all parties involved if:

- a family is purchasing a previously modified vehicle,
- a community service organization is involved in the purchase, or
- a family is making a financial contribution toward the approved modification.

6.5 REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

The family is responsible for the cost of all repairs and maintenance for the vehicle and its modification.

6.6 SELLING THE MODIFIED VEHICLE

A family may eventually sell its modified vehicle when it is no longer required. Families can contact the DHSU for assistance in coordinating the sale of the modified vehicle to another family enrolled in the Children's disABILITY Services program.

Families are expected to retain movable items for installation in the next vehicle, if possible.

6.7 ACCESSING COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

Some community service organizations provide support for vehicle modifications. Families are encouraged to discuss options for accessing community service organization support with their qualified professional or with DHSU staff. Qualified professionals may complete applications for community service organization funding on behalf of families. Community Service Workers may also assist families with the completion of an application.

For a list of community service organizations that typically fund vehicle requests for children with disability-related needs, families may consult a qualified professional, a qualified mobility equipment vendor or the DHSU.

Where community service organization supports are accessed along with Children's disABILITY Services funding, the family, the community service organization and the DHSU must collaboratively determine the funding arrangement prior to the purchase of the vehicle modification.

6.8 ALTERNATIVE FUNDING OPTIONS

Families are expected to use their private insurance to cover some of the costs of the modification where available.

6.9 TAX BENEFITS

Modified vehicles may be claimed as an eligible medical expense on federal and provincial income taxes when purchased without the use of government funds. More information is available from the Canada Revenue Agency.