

FUNDING FOR HEARING AIDS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Note: This report was prepared by CHHA BC Board Member Jessica Niemela with input from her Board colleagues and is accurate as of December 14, 2020.

Funding for hearing aids is not covered under the British Columbia Medical Services Plan. There are a number of other funding options that may pertain to an individual's social, economic, and employment status; these options are described below. Your Audiologist or Hearing Instrument Practitioner can advise you of possible funding options.

Sources of funding for adults:

- **Assistive Technology British Columbia for students:** The Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Persons with Permanent Disabilities (CSG-PDSE) is a grant that is available for eligible students with permanent disabilities in postsecondary courses who qualify for financial assistance through Student Aid BC and require assistive technology to minimize disability related barriers. Eligible students may use this grant to pay for assistive technology and related training and technical support. The program does not fund hearing aids. To find out more about this grant go to: <https://www.at-bc.ca/programs/grant-equipment-for-students-csg/>.

AT-BC also has a Public Postsecondary Loan (PPL) program which provides assistive technology on a loan basis. Students with permanent disabilities who are attending a public postsecondary institution within BC may be eligible for this service. PPL program participants can borrow assistive equipment and software, and access related services such as training and technical support, while enrolled in classes. To find out more about this program go to: <https://www.at-bc.ca/programs/loan-equipment-for-students-ppl/>.

- **Extended Health Benefits Plans:** Individuals and families often have extended health benefits through medical insurance companies allotted by their employers that provide coverage for prescription drugs, health care services and equipment such as hearing aids beyond what Medical Services Plan of BC covers. These benefits are also available to individuals through private insurers if not available by their employer.

- **Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR):** Individuals who are receiving income assistance or disability assistance may be eligible for hearing devices including hearing aids. For more information call: 1-866-866-0800.

- **Non-insured Health Benefits for First Nations and Inuit (NIHB):** The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) provides hearing aids to eligible individuals through the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program to eligible First Nations and Inuit candidates. For more information, go to: <https://www.fnha.ca/benefits/medical-supplies-and-equipment> . Or here <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1579620079031/1579620259238> .

- **Wavefront Centre of Communication and Accessibility- Lend an Ear Program:** For a nominal fee of \$140, an individual under the Lend An Ear Program can receive a hearing test, a permanent loan of one hearing aid, an earmold, and one-year of repair service. For more information call: 604-736-7391 or email: info@wavefrontcentre.ca.

- **Work BC Assistive Technology:** Individuals who are employed or seeking employment and need hearing aids in order to function in their workplace, regardless of income status, can apply for funding via the Assistive Technology and Employment-Related Disability Supports. This program helps eligible clients reduce or remove the impact of disability-related employment barriers. For more information on how to apply go to: <https://apply.workbc.ca/Orientation/AtOrientation>.

- **WorkSafe BC:** For workers with accepted work-related hearing loss claims, WorkSafe BC provides the Hearing Aid Services program, which covers hearing aids and related services. To start your claim, WorkSafe BC will need you to submit an application for benefits. To learn more go to: <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/claims/report-workplace-injury-illness/types-of-claims/hearing-loss>.

- **Veterans' Affairs Canada:** The following individuals may apply for VAC's disability benefits: Canadian Armed Forces member or Veteran, a current or former member of the RCMP, Second World War or Korean War Veteran (includes Merchant Navy), or certain civilians who served in the Second World War. For more information go to: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/health-support/physical-health-and-wellness/compensation-illness-injury/disability-benefits>. or call: 1-866-522-2122.

Sources of funding for children:

- **BC Early Hearing Program (BC EHP):** Through the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), the BC EHP funds the first set of hearing aids (as well as earmolds and batteries) for children under the age of five (5) years. The eligibility period is three years from the date that the child is enrolled in the program. Therefore, for infants identified with hearing loss following newborn hearing screening, their eligibility will typically end when they are three (3) years of age. Hearing aids, earmolds and batteries are directly billed to the BC Early Hearing Program. For more information, go to: <http://www.phsa.ca/our-services/programs-services/bc-early-hearing-program>.

- **Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD):** The MCFD includes children covered by the "At-Home Medical Benefits Program" and "Children in Care Medical Benefits Program". The At-Home Program is for children and teens with a severe disability or complex health care needs. Visit this website for further details on the At-Home Program: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/child-behaviour-development/special-needs/complex-health-needs/at-home-program>.

- **Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR):** Provides hearing aids and associated services and supplies to recipients who are eligible for the MSP supplementary benefits program. Eligible individuals are: 1) Families receiving income assistance; 2) Low income families who qualify for the BC Health Kids Program. This process is handled by Pacific Blue Cross (PBC). Clients must have already applied and been accepted for the MSP Supplementary Benefits Program to qualify. For

information on how to apply, go to: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage/msp/bc-residents/benefits/services-covered-by-msp/supplementary-benefits> . For information on the BC Healthy Kids Program: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/health-supplements-and-programs/healthy-kids> .

- **Non-insured Health Benefits for First Nations and Inuit (NIHB):** The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) provides hearing aids to eligible individuals through the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program. For more information, go to: <https://www.fnha.ca/benefits/medical-supplies-and-equipment> . or here <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1579620079031/1579620259238> .

Sources of funding provided by charities for children and/or adults:

- **Variety- Children’s Charity:** Provides direct help for children with funding for medical care and services, mobility, and communication equipment (including hearing aids) and therapies and education. To learn more go to: <https://www.variety.bc.ca/>
- **Elks and Royal Purple fund for Children:** Provides Financial Assistance for medical needs of children with hearing and speech disorders under the age of 19. For more information, go to: <https://www.elksofcanada.ca/about-our-charity> .
- **Lions Club:** Members and non-members in need may have access to available funding for hearing aids. For more information, go to: <https://www.lionsclubs.org/en/discover-our-clubs/about-us> .