



LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

The amount of assistance you may be eligible for depends on how many people are in your family unit that **reside** in the house. If you move locations, or a roommate/spouse/partner/child(ren) move into **or** out of your home, this needs to be reported to the Ministry. The Ministry also has policy related to the meaning of “resides together” to also include a person that is away for periods of time to work but ordinarily lives with the applicant.

What is a “Family Unit”?

According to the Ministry family unit can be one of the following:

- Single persons with or without dependent children
- Persons who are married or living together in a marriage-like relationship
- Reside together for three consecutive months or 9 months out of the past 12 months
- Any dependent children

Marriage-Like Relationship

You may be considered to be living in a “marriage-like relationship” (also known as a “**dependency relationship**”) with a spouse or partner or roommate if the one or more of the following are present:

- Sharing a bank account
- Sharing credit cards
- Having both names registered on property
- Having only one name on a tenancy agreement
- Sharing household tasks & expenses
- Attending community & social events as a couple
- Acting as a parent to the other’s child (E.g. Being listed as a parent on a child’s school form)
- Posting photos on social media

If you are considered to be in a spousal relationship by the Ministry but you are not, you must be prepared to prove this. (If you are living with a roommate, see the roommate section for more information on how to protect yourself)

In a Relationship but NOT Living Together

You do not have to tell the Ministry about your relationship if you are in a relationship or dating someone but **not** living together (unless the individual provides financial support).

If You Are Separated

The Ministry may ask you a series of questions if you are separated from your spouse, particularly in relation to financial interests in assets or whether you are receiving money. This is because they expect you to receive spousal support and expect you to pursue any and all other income or assets that may be available to you.

Roommates

The Ministry is always on the lookout for fraud and two people residing together can draw attention as to whether there is an undeclared “dependency relationship”. To protect yourself from any allegations of this you can:

- Have separate tenancy agreement with both your names listed and the amount of rent each of you pay
- Pay your rent directly to the landlord and get your own receipt of payment
- Do NOT get joint bank accounts or credit cards
- Do NOT insure the other person’s vehicle (deemed shared asset)
- Do NOT pay each other’s bills
- Ensure each has separate bedrooms (two people living in a one-bedroom may cause suspicion)
- Create a written agreement confirming the split of any costs (E.g. 50% of the hydro bill) if a bill must be shared



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Three-Generation Families

Three-generation families are considered a family unit and are subject to the same eligibility rules and are eligible for the same rates and supplements as other family units. A three-generation family must live together and include at least:

- One parent eligible for income, hardship or disability assistance,
- A parenting dependent child (PDC – under the age of 19) and a child of a parenting dependent child

Room and Board

When a person is residing in a room and board situation, the room and board cost may be covered by the Ministry and they may provide the person a comfort allowance. **Comfort allowance is only issued if there is money available under the person's entitlement.**

Room and Board With Parent or Child

*"A family unit living in a room and board situation is only eligible to receive the **support allowance**. In other words, the family unit is not eligible for shelter allowance."* The Ministry has a tendency to assume that a parent should provide shelter to their adult children or vice versa and consequently, may not provide shelter portions when either of the above occur. However, if they are renting a place together it is a shared rent situation and as long as both parties are listed on the rental agreement, the rental portion may be available to one or both parties if they are on income assistance.

Source: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/support-and-shelter/support-shelter-and-special-care-facilities>

Dependent Children Turning 19

*"If a dependent turns 19 while attending secondary school, they may remain on the family unit for the purposes of determining the monthly rate for the family unit. This may continue for each month that the former dependent child is **residing with the family unit and attending school**, until the end of that school year. If an applicant's child is 19 years or older, that child is not included in the family unit, even if he or she is still attending high school."*

Source: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/support-and-shelter/family-composition?keyword=living&keyword=with&keyword=parents>

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