

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) moves 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, a family unit means an applicant or recipient and their dependents. A dependent is someone who resides with the applicant or recipient and is:

- + A spouse of the applicant or recipient, OR
- + A dependent child of the applicant or recipient.

DEFINITION OF A SPOUSE

The Ministry considers two people to be spouses if they:

- + Are married,
- + Declare they are in a marriage-like relationship, or
- + Have resided together for at least 12 consecutive months (e.g. share the same living space) and
 - Demonstrate financial interdependence (e.g. share the same bank account)
 - Demonstrate social and familial interdependence (e.g. they are each others emergency contact)

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).

COUPLE 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.

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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 “marriage-like relationship”. To protect yourself from any allegations of this you can:

- + Have separate tenancy agreements with both your names listed and 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
- + 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



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

DEPENDENT CHILDREN TURNING 19

When your dependent child turns 19 years old, they must apply for IA on their own to create a file for themselves as adults, unless they are still in secondary school. Normally when a child turns 19, they should be automatically removed from your file. To be certain you avoid an overpayment, you may also want to let the Ministry know that your child needs to be taken off your file.

Source: [Family Composition - Province of British Columbia](#)

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 may provide the person a comfort allowance.

Comfort allowance is only issued if there is money available under the person’s entitlement.