

Updated: April 8, 2020

Common Questions and Answers for Service Providers Supporting Families Accessing Autism Funding

Q1: Are there changes to Autism Funding during the COVID-19 Pandemic and what resources are available for families?

A1: Yes, there are changes. CYSN workers continue to be available. As well, families can connect with Autism Information Services BC (AIS BC) and find information on the MCFD [Autism website](#).

Autism Funding period extensions are not approved at this time. Families are encouraged to connect with their service provider teams and plan alternate services and equipment purchases at this time. Up to **35% of funding** can be utilized to purchase items or pieces of equipment that would enhance their current Behavioural Plan of Intervention and consistent with current policy. Typically, this is restricted to 20%, however increasing to 35% will enable families to purchase equipment and items that assist in learning as families and children adapt to home learning and virtual instructional approaches.

In addition, during this time, "Family Counseling/Therapy" is an eligible program expense for **all age categories** during COVID-19 who are accessing Autism Funding program. Families may direct some of their child's Autism Funding to access these services through a virtual care (tele-therapy) arrangement with a qualified provider. Typically, this is restricted to children over 6 years.

For financial assistance, families are being directed to please look to the [Federal COVID-19 financial support plan](#) to learn more about: (1) The [Emergency Response Benefit](#) (2) [Increases to the Child Care Benefit](#) (3) [Regular Employment Insurance](#) and (4) [Federal government economic initiatives](#).

Families are also being directed to [BC Provincial government's COVID-19 response](#) page which has links to updates and government resources including: (1) [BC Emergency Benefit for Workers](#), (2) [Climate Action Tax Benefit](#) and (3) [BC Hydro Customer Assistance Program](#).

Q2: Will there be an interruption in payments to service providers?**A2:** We are processing incoming documents at full staffing capacity and anticipate no service interruption.

The [Service Provider Portal](#) or email, MCF.AutismFundingUnit@gov.bc.ca, is the quickest method for invoice submission.

Q3: If a service provider with a signed Autism Funding agreement must reduce or suspend services and families have signed off on funding, can they continue to bill these services without providing them?

A3: Service providers can only bill for authorized services rendered. At this time, cancellations, missed appointments and services not rendered are not eligible for coverage through Autism Funding.

Q4: Can Autism Funding be used to provide virtual care?

A4: In general, follow up appointments are considered appropriate for Virtual Care, where general guidance and advice can be offered by the therapist. Service providers can provide parent coaching and deliver services through electronic means in compliance with Regulatory Colleges and provincial privacy regulations.

Q5: Who decides if virtual care is an option for serving a child's needs through the Autism Funding Program?

A5: Parents/ Caregivers are the employers. Therefore, if the therapist suggests virtual provision of an eligible service, it is up to the Parent/ Caregiver to decide if that supports the child's therapy plan. Requests for therapists to provide Virtual Care will be adjudicated within the current guidelines of their regulatory colleges. As per page 35 of '[A Parent's Handbook: Your Guide to Autism Programs](#)', *"Families are able to select eligible services and/or service providers that best fit with needs of their child and family."*

Q6: What is direct service in the context of Virtual Care?

A6: Direct service is:

- Virtual service delivered directly by a therapist with the child/youth present
- Virtual service delivered by a therapist assistant (TA) with the child/youth present; and/or,
- Parent/caregiver coaching delivered by the therapist or TA who are providing feedback on a session where a parent/caregiver is interacting with the child

Q7: What are MCFD's guidelines for Virtual Care for providers?

A7: Service providers are expected to comply with the standards set by their regulatory colleges related to Virtual Care and all other service practices. To bill Autism Funding Branch the following is required:

- Child/youth must be present for the session
- Child/youth must have already been assessed by the practitioner in a face to face meeting
- Parent/guardian must have existing authorization for services
- Privacy considerations must comply with MCFD's [confidentiality and Disclosure of Information guidelines](#) and [E-communication guidelines](#) along with other provincial [privacy laws](#).
- Families are the employer.