

Agreements also exist between government ministries and other agencies and governments to share information. These agreements are authorized by the *Employment and Assistance Act* or the *Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act* and are allowed by provincial freedom of information and privacy laws and/or federal privacy laws.

### **If I signed a form when I applied for assistance, why do I have to sign again at my eligibility review?**

The ministry feels it is important for you to understand that we may verify personal information again. To ensure we have discussed this with you and that you understand, we ask you to sign the form again.

### **Can you ask family members for information about me?**

The ministry can contact your spouse (including marriage-like relationships) and your dependants for information to determine if you, or they, qualify for assistance.

For immigration sponsorship, other family members may be contacted. If you're underage or are in the Child in the Home of a Relative Program, your parents will be contacted.

### **If I feel I have been unfairly denied assistance, what can I do?**

There are a number of appeal processes open to you. Details on each of the appeal steps are in the *Reconsideration and Appeals* brochure. You may ask your employment and assistance worker for a copy. The brochure is also available on-line at: [www.eia.gov.bc.ca/PUBLICAT/bcea/appeal.htm](http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/PUBLICAT/bcea/appeal.htm).

### **What happens if I do not sign the form?**

If you do not sign the form, either when you apply or at your eligibility review, your application is considered incomplete. The ministry cannot check to see if the personal information you have given is correct and so we do not know if you qualify for assistance. If you do not sign, you will not be eligible for assistance.

### **Can I see the verifying information you have collected about me?**

Yes, you may contact your employment and assistance worker to see the information collected from other agencies.

### **What can I do if I feel my privacy has not been respected?**

You can begin by speaking to the district supervisor in your local Employment and Income Assistance office or to the ministry's Information, Privacy and Records Services.

As well, an independent body called the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner may look into complaints about the improper collection, use or disclosure of your personal information by ministry.

### **If I have more questions about the form, who can I contact?**

Speak with your Employment and Assistance Worker or the District Supervisor at your Employment and Income Assistance office by calling:

➤ **1 866 866-0800**

Or visit our ministry web site at:

➤ [www.eia.gov.bc.ca](http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca)



## **Your Rights to Privacy and the BC Employment and Assistance process**

When you apply for income assistance or when your eligibility is reviewed under the *Employment and Assistance Act* or the *Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act*, you will be asked to provide personal information to the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance. The application form or eligibility review form explains that the personal information you have provided will be checked to make sure it is correct. When you sign the form, you are saying you understand that the ministry must check the information. You are also agreeing that the sources we contact can release personal information about you that is needed to determine your eligibility for assistance.

This document helps answer some questions you may have about signing the form and about your privacy rights.



### **Why do you check the personal information I give you on my application form?**

The British Columbia government is responsible for ensuring that need for assistance is balanced with the need to be accountable to taxpayers for how money is spent.

Ministry staff must therefore check to ensure that people who apply for, or receive assistance, are eligible and are receiving the assistance they need.

When you provide information, you have the right to be:

- asked for information in a fair and lawful way;
- told why the ministry wants this information, and what authority it has to collect information;
- asked only for information that is required to determine if you are eligible;
- told how the ministry will use, disclose, and protect your personal information;
- given access to your own personal records;
- allowed to request correction of any wrong personal information; and

- given the business phone number and address of a ministry official who can be contacted for further information.

### **What legal authority do you have to collect and check the personal information I have provided?**

Personal information is collected and checked under the authority of the *Employment and Assistance Act* or the *Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act*, and in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

### **How does the government protect my privacy?**

Under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* government is accountable for all personal information in its custody and control. By law, personal information must be protected and may only be collected, used and disclosed (given out) by authorized government staff.

The government may only disclose your personal information in limited cases if you have given your consent. Your personal information can also be disclosed where the law allows or requires its release.

### **Is British Columbia the only province that checks personal information when someone applies for assistance?**

No, all levels of government across Canada check personal information with a variety of sources when someone applies for assistance. The government of British Columbia checks everyone's personal information.

### **Can you give me some examples of how my personal information might be verified and with whom you might check?**

Personal information can be checked with a variety of public and private sources. Some public bodies and private organizations require the written consent of clients before they will release information. Examples of these types of organizations:

- Workers' Compensation Board (WCB)
- Financial institutions
- Vital Statistics
- Insurance Corporation of BC (ICBC)
- Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)
- Lottery Corporation of BC
- Cheque cashing agencies
- Credit bureaus