

Bear Essentials

Program summary

Bear Essentials is a family support program offered through Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island that assists with the costs of health-related travel and equipment for Island kids and is intended to fill the gaps that exist in public funding. The program is designed for families that struggle to afford the associated costs or that have barriers limiting their ability to access the health care or equipment for their child.

Children/youth must meet all the following conditions:

- ✓ 0 to 19 years old (prenatal up to 20th birthday),
- ✓ live on Vancouver Island or the surrounding islands,
- ✓ have a medical condition, health challenge, or disability confirmed by a health care professional,
- ✓ require financial support to cover the cost of the item(s) in the application, and
- ✓ have not exceeded the lifetime Bear Essentials maximum of \$10,000.

Bear Essentials is a program accessed through referral only. A health care professional familiar with the applicant's needs and family circumstances should complete the online application with consent of the applicant's parent or primary guardian.

Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island prioritizes applications from referring professionals working within public systems like health authorities, school districts, and community organizations. Examples of referring professionals include but are not limited to the following:

- audiologists
- behaviour consultants
- counsellors
- dieticians
- infant development consultants
- nurses
- occupational therapists
- orthotists
- physicians
- physiotherapists
- program navigators
- social workers
- speech language pathologists.

Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island encourages families to access available public resources to complement Bear Essentials funding. The program is intended to fill gaps through a low-barrier, supportive, and dignified application process.

When a family's needs do not fit with the Bear Essentials criteria, we are committed to offering navigation to relevant resources and supports. To explore navigation support, a referring professional can connect with the Program Navigator.

Contact: Cheryl Jordan | beaessentials@islandkidsfirst.com | 1-833-751-0874 (toll free)

General guidelines

- Bear Essentials provides funds to support future costs of health-related travel and equipment. The program does not reimburse expenses incurred before an application was approved. In case of emergency travel, special consideration may be available.
- Referring professionals may apply on behalf of families for both travel and equipment on one form. One trip and one piece of equipment per form.
- If there are multiple children in a family who require Bear Essentials support, a separate application is required for each.
- Children may have more than one application submitted on their behalf during their lifetime and may be eligible for up to \$10,000 in cumulative funding.
- All applications will be reviewed to determine suitability, and to prioritize need alongside available funding at the time of submission.
- If any parts of the application require further attention or if additional support through information and referral can be provided, the Program Navigator will get in touch with the referring professional and reach out to the family if appropriate.
- For travel funding, a document confirming appointments/treatment is required and should be uploaded through the online system. Documentation can also be sent later by email but may result in the application taking longer to process.
- A consent form signed by the parent/guardian should accompany each application. Ideally a digital signature at the time of submission can be provided. Alternatively, the consent form can be printed in advance and provided to the parent/guardian to sign and then uploaded through the online system. The consent form can also be sent later by email but may result in the application taking longer to process. Where appropriate, loan libraries will be recommended for short term equipment use or to trial equipment prior to purchase.
- Typically, funding will be paid to the vendor when accommodation or equipment is approved. The family, or the referring professional acting on their behalf, is responsible for booking the accommodation and/or ordering the equipment. Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island is responsible for closing the transaction by paying the vendor.
- Typically, travel funding will be paid directly to the family by electronic funds transfer. Cheques will be mailed if the family cannot accept electronic funds transfer.
- Applications will be reviewed as quickly as possible; however, the program is not set up to handle urgent requests where the funds are required immediately.
- Approved funds expire if not used within 3 months of approval date and a new application will need to be submitted.
- Bear Essentials does not fund dental work, medication, consumables, and resources such as therapies.

Type of requests

Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island's Bear Essentials program is focused on the areas of greatest need; health-related travel and equipment.

Health-related travel

Referring professionals may apply on behalf of families for funding to support travel within British Columbia when a child requires health care outside their home community. Confirmed appointments and/or treatment within 3 months of the application date are acceptable.

Approved applicants will be provided with travel funding based on a calculation that accounts for the departure location, the intended destination, and the estimated duration of stay (Appendix D). The calculation accounts for round trips and will be consistently applied irrespective of the number of family members traveling. Approved travel funding is typically provided directly to the family shortly before their departure date and can be used to assist with costs such as gas, parking, meals, and incidentals. Families are expected to use the province's Travel Assistance Program for BC Ferries when eligibility requirements fit.

- Supports prenatal conditions so mothers-to-be experiencing high-risk pregnancies can access support for health-related travel. In the instance of a healthy pregnancy that requires temporary relocation for birthing support, funding is capped at \$1,000 and families may re-apply with subsequent pregnancies.
- Accommodation costs can also be supported. Families are encouraged to use affordable facilities like Jeneece Place, Qwalayu House, or Ronald McDonald House whenever available and to use the province's BC Family Residence Program for accommodation when their child receives health care at BC Children's Hospital or Sunny Hill Health Centre. Approved accommodation expenses are typically paid directly to the vendor.
- Travel support for special dental procedures involving general anesthetic will be considered, but not travel for regular, routine dental appointments.

Health-related equipment

Referring professionals may apply on behalf of families for funding to support the purchase of health-related equipment. Families are encouraged to pursue the most cost-effective option that best meets the child/youth's health needs. Approved equipment expenses are typically paid directly to the vendor.

Types of eligible equipment include but are not limited to:

- Medical equipment such as hearing aids or a wheelchair,
- Adaptive equipment such as specialized seating or a standing frame, or
- Technology hardware and software such as an iPad with special communication software for a non-verbal child.

How to apply

1. Assess need and program fit

- Identify need for health-related travel or equipment support.
- Consider available public resources to address needs (Appendix B) and whether Bear Essentials is a fit.
- Introduce Bear Essentials to the family.
- Receive verbal permission from the family to proceed with an application.

2. Gather information

For privacy reasons, the online system does not have the ability to store information. Applications need to be completed in full at one time. Closing the online application prior to submitting will result in loss of data so it is recommended that all necessary information is gathered and accessible prior to starting an application.

- Work with the family to acquire the necessary information for a successful application (Appendix A). This may include connecting with equipment vendors for quotes/estimates, supporting the family to plan their health-related travel, helping the family get an appointment/treatment schedule, gaining an understanding of funding confirmed from other sources, getting the consent form signed, etc.
- Connect with the Program Navigator as needed. Their role is to help you help families and to facilitate successful applications. Please reach out!

3. Complete online form and submit required documents

- Complete the online application with the parent/guardian present so that the consent form can be signed electronically.
- If an in-person appointment with the parent/guardian is not possible, complete the online application and obtain a signed hard copy of the consent form from the parent/guardian and submit it with the online application or by email (Appendix C.)
- Upload required documents through the online system or send shortly after by email.

4. Application status

- You will receive an email confirming that the application was received. If the parent/guardian provided an email, they will also receive a confirmation email.
- All applications will be reviewed to determine suitability, and to prioritize need alongside available funding.
- If any parts of the application require further attention or if additional support through information and referral can be provided, the Program Navigator will get in touch with the referring professional or family as appropriate.
- Final granting decisions will be communicated as quickly as possible to you and the family.

5. Support family with acquisition

- The family, or you, the referring professional acting on their behalf, is responsible for ordering equipment or booking accommodation. The Program Navigator will close the transaction by paying the vendor.
- If travel funding is approved, the Program Navigator will arrange payment to the family.

Privacy commitment

As a registered charity, Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island (CHFVI) collects personal information under the authority of the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA). Personal information (Appendix A) collected through an application to the Bear Essentials program will be used for the purpose of evaluating a family's eligibility to receive a grant, to coordinate disbursement of the funds, and to help the family access other relevant support programs.

Non-identifying information gathered from the application may be used on an aggregate basis for understanding need, reporting trends, demonstrating impact, and improving services.

Information in this application will be reviewed in confidence by CHFVI staff. All personal information will be used only as specified and stored securely.

If you have questions about the collection, use, or storage of this information by the CHFVI, please contact the Director of Community Investment at 250-940-4950 ext. 105.

Online application link

If you need the [online application link](#), have questions, or require technical support, please contact the Program Navigator:

Cheryl Jordan
beaessentials@islandkidsfirst.com
1-833-751-0874 (toll free) | 250-940-4948

Appendix A - Summary of application questions

About the referring professional

Name
Profession
Organization
Contact Details

About the applicant

Child/Youth Name
Preferred Pronoun
Parent/Guardian Name(s)
Contact Details
Date of Birth or Due Date
Identifies as Indigenous?
Recent immigrant, refugee, or newcomer to Canada?

Family circumstances

Does the family income just cover the basics of running the home?
Does the family have day to day support from other people for things like transportation and childcare?

About the medical condition, disability, or health challenge

Description
Life-threatening?
Lifelong?
Type of pregnancy (only for prenatal applications)

Request details – health-related travel

Departure location
Health travel destination
Departure date
Return date
Accommodation plan including preferred vendor and cost including taxes
Additional travel details (optional)
**A document confirming appointments/treatment is required*

Request details – health-related equipment

Type of equipment
Description of how the equipment supports the applicant
Urgency of the equipment
Equipment vendor
Equipment cost including taxes and shipping
**A quote/estimate from the equipment vendor is required*

Complementary funding and support

Other funding and support pursued
Confirmed funding amounts from other sources (if applicable)

Informed consent for parent/guardian

Consent to submit information and for future communication related to the application
Consent for Children’s Health Foundation of Vancouver Island to follow-up to discuss story sharing opportunities

Digital signature of referring professional

Signature indicating you verify the information in the application and support its submission

Appendix B – Complementary funding and support

The Bear Essentials program is intended to fill the gaps that exist with current health care programs. The following publicly available resources may be applicable to complement Bear Essentials funding.

1. An extended health benefits plan through place of employment

2. Ministry of Children and Families

[Autism Funding](#) - funding for autism intervention services and therapies.

[At Home Program](#) - support children and teens with a severe disability or complex health care needs.

3. Ministry of Social Development & Poverty Reduction

[Healthy Kids Program](#) - basic optical care, hearing assistance, and dental treatment for children in low-income families.

4. Ministry of Health

[Pharmacare](#) - helps BC residents with the cost of certain medical supplies as well as pharmaceuticals.

[Travel Assistance Program](#) - helps alleviate some of the transportation costs for eligible BC residents who must travel within the province for non-emergency medical specialist services.

[BC Family Residence Program](#) - accommodation assistance to enable families to stay together when their child requires medical care at BC Children's Hospital or Sunny Hill Health Centre.

5. First Nations Health Authority

[Medical supplies and equipment](#) - medical equipment and supplies for personal use.

[Vision care](#) - covers eye exams and eyeglasses.

[Pharmacy](#) - prescription drugs, over the counter drugs, and compounds.

[Dental](#) - covers eligible dental treatments.

6. Government of Canada

[Jordan's Principle](#) - supports First Nations children to access products, services, and supports they need. It can help with a wide range of health, social, and educational needs.

Appendix C - Parent/guardian consent form

Informed consent for parent/guardian

As a registered charity, Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island (CHFVI) collects personal information under the authority of the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA). Personal information collected through an application to the Bear Essentials program will be used for the purpose of evaluating your eligibility to receive a grant, to coordinate disbursement of the funds, and to help you access other relevant support programs.

Use of information

Information in this application will be reviewed in confidence by CHFVI staff for the primary purpose of determining your child's eligibility to receive funding through the Bear Essentials program. All personal information collected will be used only as specified and stored securely.

Non-identifying information gathered from this application may be used on an aggregate basis for understanding need, reporting trends, demonstrating impact, and improving services.

If you have questions about the collection, use, or storage of this information by the CHFVI, please contact the Director of Community Investment at 250-940-4950 ext 105.

Agreement

By agreeing below, you hereby consent to:

(i) the collection of personal information for the purposes set out above;

(ii) permission for your referring professional to submit the information in this application form and any required documents accompanying the form;

(iii) permission for Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island to communicate directly with you, your referring professional, and vendors to coordinate your Bear Essentials grant.

Your signature indicates you have read, understood, and agree to the above terms.

Full Name of Parent/Guardian (print clearly) _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Date (MM/DD/YYYY) _____

Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island provides Bear Essentials thanks to generous contributions from donors. Permission to share your child's story helps people understand your experience, inspires giving, and allows other families to access support for many years to come. Please indicate if Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island can get in touch with you about opportunities to share your story. If you provide permission, the intention is to contact you at an appropriate time that is less stressful, and you would have the option to decline if your interest has changed.

Yes, Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island can contact me in the future to discuss story sharing

No thanks

Your referring professional can upload your signed consent form through the online application system or it can be emailed to beaessentials@islandkidsfirst.com. Thank-you.

Appendix D - Mileage chart

The following chart will give you and the family an estimate of the travel funding amount. The Bear Essentials Program Navigator will calculate the amount using this chart and the information you provide and then add it to the request total if you indicate travel funding is required.

Health Travel Funding Calculation (Daytrip Amount)		Departing From:											
		North West Coast	North Island	West Coast	Port Alberni	Campbell River	Comox Valley	Oceanside	Nanaimo	Cowichan Valley	Victoria/CRD	Vancouver/Lower Mainland	Outside Lower Mainland within BC
Travelling To:	North West Coast	x	\$92	\$140	\$106	\$65	\$81	\$96	\$109	\$122	\$139	\$142	To be determined, follow-up required
	North Island	\$92	x	\$181	\$148	\$108	\$124	\$96	\$149	\$163	\$182	\$183	
	West Coast	\$140	\$181	x	\$75	\$116	\$103	\$86	\$98	\$112	\$128	\$132	
	Port Alberni	\$106	\$148	\$75	x	\$82	\$69	\$52	\$64	\$78	\$95	\$98	
	Campbell River	\$65	\$108	\$116	\$82	x	\$55	\$71	\$83	\$97	\$114	\$118	
	Comox Valley	\$81	\$124	\$103	\$69	\$55	x	\$58	\$71	\$85	\$102	\$105	
	Oceanside	\$96	\$96	\$86	\$52	\$71	\$58	x	\$53	\$67	\$84	\$83	
	Nanaimo	\$109	\$149	\$98	\$64	\$83	\$71	\$53	x	\$54	\$71	\$74	
	Cowichan Valley	\$122	\$163	\$112	\$78	\$97	\$85	\$67	\$54	x	\$57	\$90	
	Victoria/CRD	\$139	\$182	\$128	\$95	\$114	\$102	\$84	\$71	\$57	x	\$78	
	Vancouver/Lower Mainland	\$142	\$183	\$132	\$98	\$118	\$105	\$83	\$74	\$90	\$78	x	
	Outside Lower Mainland within BC	To be determined, follow-up required											
Other Cdn Province or International	Only medical travel within BC is eligible for Bear Essentials travel support; contact Bear Essentials Program Coordinator for referral to other programs												

*Travel funding accounts for round trips.

**Travel funding calculation assumes BC Ferries is covered by the provincial Travel Assistance Plan.

***Funding for additional days is \$40 per diem for all regions irrespective of the number of family members travelling.

****See regional definitions below.

North West Coast includes Gold River, Tahsis, Zeballos

North Island includes Port McNeill, Port Hardy, Port Alice

West Coast includes Tofino, Ahousaht, Ucluelet, Bamfield

Port Alberni includes the Port Alberni Valley and surrounding area

Campbell River includes Quadra Island, Cortes Island, Sayward

Comox Valley includes Comox, Courtenay, Cumberland, Lazo, Royston, Union Bay, Merville, Black Creek

Oceanside includes Bowser, Qualicum Beach, Parksville, Coombs, Nanoose

Nanaimo includes Greater Nanaimo, Ladysmith, Lantzville, Gabriola

Cowichan Valley includes Duncan, Crofton, Cowichan, Mill Bay, Cobble Hill, Chemainus

Victoria/Capital Regional District includes Southern Gulf Islands