

Three - Week Work Search: Do I have to do it?

The Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance usually requires people applying for welfare to complete a 3-week work search before you can receive any benefits.

You do not have to do a 3-week work search if you:

- need food, a place to stay or medical attention right away (if so, you **must ask** for an “**Emergency Needs Assessment**” and this assessment should happen within **24 hours**);
- are 65 or over;
- have a severe physical or mental condition that doesn't allow you to search for a job;
- are applying for “child in the home of a relative” benefits;
- are fleeing an abusive spouse or relative; and/or
- are not legally allowed to work in Canada.

In all of these cases, the Ministry must decide right away whether or not you are eligible for welfare. The Ministry is not allowed to make you do any kind of 3-week wait.

If you are made to wait three weeks, or if you have to wait longer than 24 hours for your Emergency Needs Assessment, contact the BC Ombudsman at 1-800-567-3247 to make a complaint.

The Ministry is **not allowed** to tell you to go to a food bank or a shelter instead of giving you benefits.

**To find out more about your rights, contact the
LawLINE 604-408-2172 (Lower Mainland) OR 1-866-577-2525 (Rest of BC)**

**To find an advocate in your area contact:
www.povnet.org - look under “Find an Advocate”**

This fact sheet was prepared by the BC Public Interest Advocacy Centre and the Community Legal Assistance Society in January, 2007.