

November 2007

Children's Medical Equipment Recycling and Loan Service
Questions and Answers

Q. What changes are being made to the medical equipment program?

- A. Since 2001, the Canadian Red Cross Society has been operating a loan and recycling service for medical equipment required by children and youth with special needs in the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island. The Children's Medical Equipment Recycling and Loan Service (CMERLS) has now been expanded to serve all eligible children and youth in the province. With the expansion of the program, therapists will be able to check current inventory by contacting the Red Cross representative or by accessing their website at: www.redcrossequipment.com before submitting a request for new equipment.

Q. Why was the Red Cross chosen to deliver this program?

- A. MCFD consulted with many organizations and found that the Canadian Red Cross Society was the only organization in BC with a formal recycling/loan program in place. The addition of Children's Medical Equipment Recycling and Loan Service (CMERLS) simply builds on the existing infrastructure that includes the Enhanced Community Medical Equipment Loan Service, an inventory database, 94 depots throughout BC and many years of experience.

Q. What kinds of equipment can be recycled?

- A. The majority of equipment can be recycled. This includes durable medical equipment, bio-medical equipment and a variety of other equipment such as therapy mats and balls.

Q. How will equipment be recycled?

- A. In most cases, equipment will be serviced, cleaned and repaired at the Red Cross upon return. The Red Cross may sub-contract complex repairs of high-end equipment. Items that the Red Cross determines cannot be adequately cleaned and refurbished will be discarded.

Q. What do I do with equipment that MCFD purchased for me - can I sell it or keep it if I need a replacement?

- A. All medical equipment purchased by MCFD after May 1, 2001 is the property of the Red Cross. Families that received medical equipment after May 1, 2001 are required to return the equipment to the Red Cross when it is no longer required. Families are also strongly encouraged to donate MCFD equipment purchased prior to May 1, 2001 to the Red Cross.

Families should call the Red Cross toll free at 1-800-565-8000 for detailed information on receiving and returning equipment.

Q. How long can a child use equipment supplied through CMERLS?

- A. The equipment is available for as long as it is needed, even when the youth becomes an adult. If the equipment is no longer needed, simply contact the Red Cross to arrange for its return, regardless of the client's age.

Q. What about equipment that is stored in MCFD offices or Child Development Centres?

- A. All equipment purchased by MCFD after May 1, 2001 must be sent to the Red Cross for recycling. Other equipment may also be donated to CMERLS. The Red Cross will work with the CDC's to develop cooperative arrangements that facilitate recycling of surplus MCFD- funded medical equipment and to make this equipment available to non-MCFD clients.

Q. How will children's equipment needs be determined?

- A. Each child's therapist will continue to be responsible for assessing equipment needs and making recommendations. Families will work with their child's therapist to choose equipment that meets their child's needs. The approval process remains separate and will not be impacted by the availability of recycled equipment.

Q. Will families be able to trial recycled equipment?

- A. Yes, if the prescribed piece of equipment is available in the CMERLS inventory, it will be supplied to the child as soon as possible for a 30 day trial. If the trial is successful, the equipment remains on a long term loan.

Q. Currently families can pay for upgrades themselves if they wish, or add to the maximum funding available from MCFD to buy more expensive equipment. Will they still be able to do this?

- A. Yes, families can continue to pay for upgrades or customize equipment. However, these upgrades and custom features become the property of the Red Cross unless they are removable without damage to the basic equipment. For example, if MCFD pays \$1,500 toward a new wheelchair for a family, and that family purchases a \$2,300 wheelchair with a removable headrest that can be used on their next chair, the family may keep the headrest when they return the chair. Otherwise, the family is expected to return the entire chair for recycling. There will be no financial reimbursement for the funds that the family contributed; however, there will also be no charge to the next family who benefits from the upgraded equipment. Therefore, in the long term, each family's non-removable upgrades become a resource for all, with the understanding that someday they may benefit in turn.

Q. What can parents expect regarding the quality of recycled equipment?

A. One of the goals of the program is to ensure that the quality of recycled equipment is equal to or better than that of the equipment currently supplied to MCFD clients under the terms of the existing program. Our experience shows that pediatric equipment usually stays in good shape because the needs of children change frequently due to growth or changes in their condition.

Q. How will the expansion of the recycling project be evaluated?

A. MCFD will perform a customer service survey in our first year of expansion. Additionally, parents and therapists can contact MCFD at 1-888-613-3232 to provide feedback on the recycling program.

Q. What are the benefits to clients and communities?

A. There are numerous benefits:

- All equipment is listed on a data base so therapists can find out what is available.
- Clients and therapists have the opportunity to trial a wider range of equipment before making a decision.
- In some cases children are able to get more complex equipment sooner.
- The ministry has agreed to the transfer of surplus MCFD-funded equipment to other Red Cross loan programs to benefit non-MCFD clients.
- Families/therapists (if needed and justified) are able to request replacement for the recycled pieces of equipment any time. There is no waiting period (such as five years to replace a wheelchair) as there is for some new items.
- Recycled equipment is good for the environment and minimizes waste.