



Special Needs Project Guide

Welcome to the Special Needs Project!

This guide provides information about this unique labour initiative created to support CUPW/UPCE-PSAC families who have sons and daughters with disabilities.



1. What is the Special Needs Project?

The Special Needs Project is an innovative work and family program for postal workers who have children with disabilities. The project helps meet the special needs of the children and eases their parent's added financial, physical and emotional stresses.

Qualifying families receive \$100 to \$200 a month, depending on their child's age, and can participate in the project until their child turns 18 or starts receiving adult services. The funds can be used for additional costs directly related to the child's diagnosis.

Families are also supported through a regular newsletter, website (specialneedsproject.ca), project office staff and phone calls three times a year with an advisor.

2. Where does the funding come from?

The project is funded out of the Child Care Fund negotiated by CUPW and by UPCE-PSAC in their respective collective agreements with Canada Post Corporation. The corporation provides the funding according to the amounts specified in the collective agreements. CUPW co-ordinates the funds for both unions. The Special Needs Project is the biggest project under the Child Care Fund.

A description of the Child Care Fund can be found in Appendix L (CUPW Urban Operations Collective Agreement), Appendix J (CUPW Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers Collective Agreement) and Appendix H (UPCE-PSAC Collective Agreement).



3. Who administers the project?

Breton Ability administers the project. They are considered a leader in the disability sector in Nova Scotia. They are committed to supporting individuals with varying abilities achieve their greatest potential. Breton Ability prides themselves on being an organization of learning and excellence for their residents and offer a wide variety of individualized programs to help them contribute to, and be included in, the community at large.

4. How is the project accountable to CUPW and UPCE?

Members submit an Invoice and Statement of Actual Expenses for each funding period. Advisors complete interview forms, project staff do evaluations based on member feedback, and we have the project audited by a qualified 3rd party. Together, this documentation provides accountability – demonstrating the impact of the project on members, their families, their sons and daughters, and their communities.

5. Who is eligible?

The project is available to those who:

- a. Work for Canada Post and are covered either by the CUPW-CPC Urban Operations Collective Agreement, the RSMC Collective Agreement, or the PSAC-CPC Collective Agreement. Full-time, part-time, temporary employees, and those on paid leave, such as parental or sick leave, are also eligible.

- b. Have a child under the age of 18 with a chronic disability that produces significant financial, emotional and physical stress on the family.
- c. Face costs directly related to their child's diagnosis that are more than what the parent of a typical child would incur.

** CUPW or UPCE-PSAC members who have grandchildren with special needs may be eligible if they are the child's primary financial and residential support.*



6. What expenses does the project cover?

The project covers expenses directly related to the diagnosis accepted by the Special Needs Project. Funding is based on the individual needs of the family—what might be an eligible expense for one child might not be for another child whose situation is different. Office staff can assist members to determine which expenses would be best to list on their forms.

Some examples of eligible expenses:

1. Child care specialized for the child's needs; respite fees.

Note: Funding cannot be given to family members who provide child care. Members receiving full-time funding must claim their child care costs as an eligible expense (see Question 10, "How much funding is available?").

2. A worker required to support the child in a community program.
3. Training costs for support staff.
4. Equipment/renovations necessary for participation at a program site, or upgrades to home (e.g., wheelchair ramp or other facility renovations).
5. Specialized transportation (e.g., handi-bus) to allow a child with diagnosis to participate at a program site.

6. Transportation costs related to treatment of the child's diagnosis. (Milage is based on the CUPW reimbursement rate.).
7. Uninsured medical expenses, medical equipment and supplies (including therapies).
8. Alternative medicines and therapies.
9. Recreation-related expenses may qualify directly related to the child's diagnosis and if the equipment or programming is specifically adapted to accommodate a child with special needs. This includes specialized recreation programs or inclusive settings that serve both children with and without disabilities. *Parents must provide documentation of the program's inclusion policy and its practical strategies.*

The Special Needs Project is intended to help with costs over and above what parents of a typical child might incur. Before listing a recreation program, it is helpful for members to ask themselves whether they would put their child in the program if she or he did not have a special need, or whether they would enroll their other children in similar programs. If the answer to either question is "Yes" then the expense is not eligible because it is not more than the costs any parent might incur.

10. Education-related services.



7. How does the project work?

There are three funding periods in the year:

- 1. September to February;**
- 2. March to June; and**
- 3. July and August.**

- At the beginning of each period, project advisors contact participating members by phone. (*For more information about the advisors and their role, see Question 9*).
- Members complete an invoice that reflects their best estimate of where the funding may be spent. A cheque is issued once the necessary paperwork is received and expenses approved.
- At the end of each funding period, members complete a Statement of Actual Expenses to identify how the money was spent. All new members need to provide a copy of receipts for at least a full year. (Members should keep original receipts for their own records.)
- The funding received from the project is a taxable benefit and must be included in the member's income tax reporting. Members receive a T-4A each year which is mailed by the February 28th deadline.
- Every year, members must complete a contract (Form A2 Contract Renewal) agreeing to comply with project policy.
- The staff at the Special Needs Project are available weekdays to respond to any questions or concerns you may have. Project staff are responsible for determining eligibility of members and their expenses and are knowledgeable of ways the project can best serve you and your child's needs.



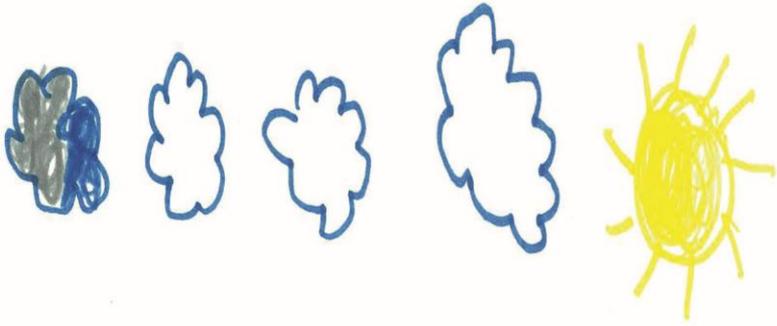
8. What are the terms of the annual contract project members must sign?

Participating parents must agree to:

- Notify the project of any change in their union status due to retirement, change of bargaining units, a leave of absence without pay or if they are no longer working for Canada Post.
- Notify the project of any change related to their child's dependency on them for care or a change in diagnosis.
- Repay any funds received from the Special Needs Project for any period of time during which they are not eligible for the project.
- Use the funding to cover costs directly related to the diagnosis of the child as identified on the invoice form.
- Use the funds to pay individuals who are not family members.
- Complete an interview with the advisor when she/he calls.
- Permit the Special Needs Project and CUPW-UPCE/PSAC to use the information gathered during the interviews for research/advocacy purposes. Member's identities will remain confidential.

- This project is designed to help with those costs directly related to the child's diagnosis that are not covered by other available government, education or employment-related programs. Any eligible claims should be submitted to the member's extended health, dental or vision and hearing plans first, as well as any additional plans which cover the child. The uninsured portion can be claimed under this project.

** Project members should ensure they are members in good standing of their respective unions. Contact your shop steward or local officer for more information.*



9. Who are the project advisors and what do they do?

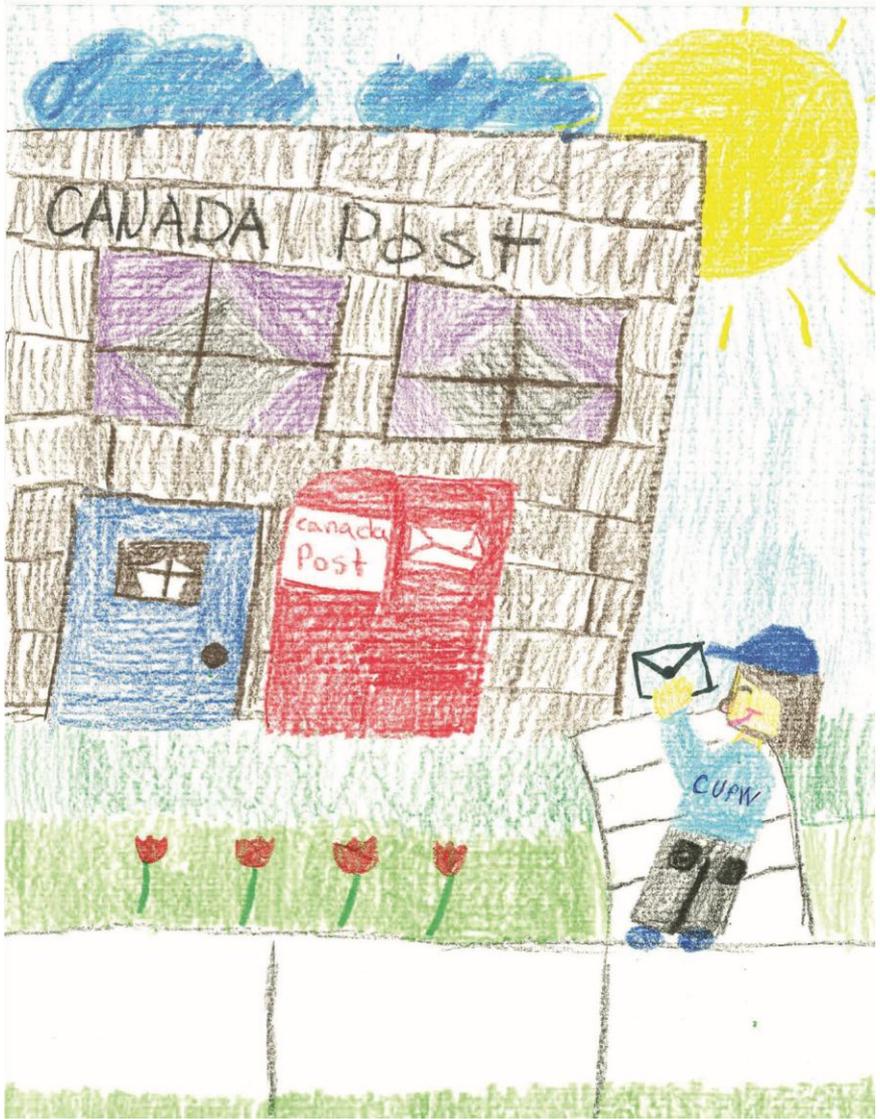
Advisors can be special needs workers, social workers, child care professionals, or advocates for children with disabilities. They may also be a parent of a child with a disability. They have knowledge of services and special needs issues in your province. Most importantly, they understand the challenges parents in the project face.

An advisor will contact parents at the beginning of each of the three funding periods.

When the advisor calls, she or he:

- Checks in and offers support, information and resources according to the member's needs.
- Assists in identifying possible uses of the funding. *(Members should check with the Special Needs Project office for confirmation of what is an eligible expense.)*
- Conducts an interview with the member to help the project identify trends and challenges, evaluate how things are going, and provide a research base for the project and the unions. Advisors work with the Special Needs Project on a part-time basis. * They stay with assigned members for as long as they, and the members, are with the project.

** Outside of regularly scheduled advisor calls, project members should contact the Special Needs Project office directly if they have any questions or concerns (contact information is provided at the end of this booklet).*



10. How much funding is available?

There are two levels of funding:

1. Full-Time funding:

Full-time funding is for children of preschool age who are in paid child care for 25 hours or more each week.

Members receive a maximum of \$200 per month.

Members who receive full-time funding must list child care on her/his forms.

2. Part-Time funding:

Part-time funding provides \$100 per month during the school year and \$200 per month for the summer (July and August).

The Special Needs Project office confirms the level of funding members are eligible to receive.

11. How do postal workers apply to the project?

Contact the Special Needs Project Office at **1-800-840-5465**.

Potential members will need to complete an Intake interview to determine their eligibility for the project. If eligible the staff will then send members a package containing the two forms that need to be completed and returned.

1. The funding contract with verification of diagnosis: Form A.

2. The invoice for the current period: Form B1 for part-time funding or Form B2 for full-time funding.

Note that members will have to fill in Form B1 or B2 for each of the three funding periods each year, and Form A2 once per year.

Members should speak to the office staff to help them complete their forms if they have any questions.



12. Important Information for New Members

- New members become eligible once their completed forms are received by the project.
- To avoid getting bumped to the following period please ensure project staff receive the required forms by these deadlines:

September to February period: Deadline January 1st

March to June period: Deadline May 1st

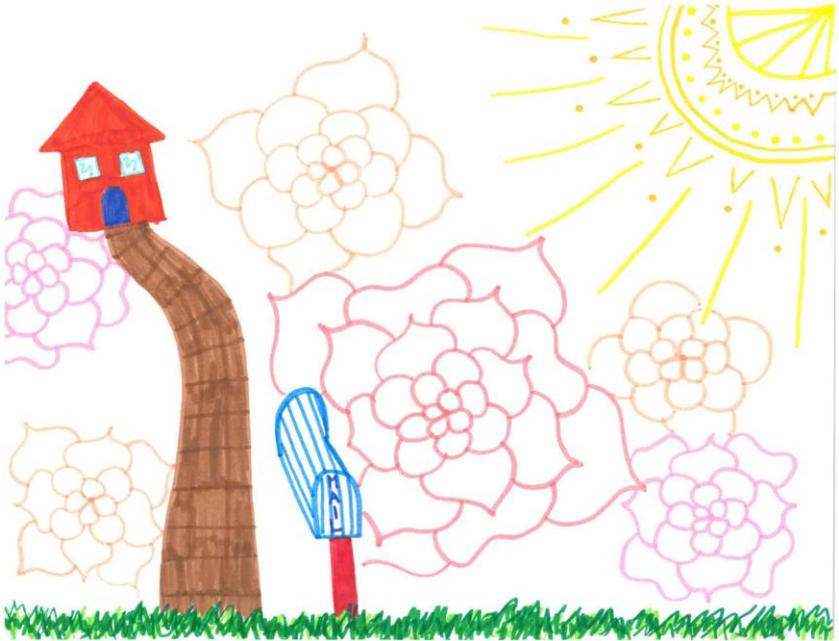
July and August period: Deadline July 31st

- Forms may be faxed or e-mailed by the deadlines, but the originals must also be sent to the Special Needs Project by regular mail.

13. How do I complete an invoice form?

The invoice is completed at the beginning of each period. The form asks members to identify where they think the funding will be spent. Project staff review the invoice to ensure that the planned expenses are eligible and that costs have been identified for each item.

- Check that all preprinted, personal information is correct. *Any errors should be corrected directly on the form.*
- Estimate where the money will be spent. Remember: The project requires all of the necessary details each time a form is completed, even if the expenses are recurring.
- Include the approximate cost of each expense listed.



14. How do I complete a Statement of Actual Expenses (SAE)?

This form is completed at the end of each period to provide amounts and an accurate account of how the funding was used. The expenses listed on the invoice form at the beginning of the period and the SAE at the end of the period do not have to match, since families' situations can change. All new members must provide receipts with their SAE for the first year they are in the project.

- List actual expenses with a brief breakdown. For example: tutoring @ \$10/hr x 3 hrs/week = \$120/month x 6 months = \$720. (Even though you may only have received \$600 for the period, please list actual expenses. Your total expenses will often exceed the funding allocated for the project period.)
- Identify the month each item was purchased.
- Eligible expenses must be incurred within the funding period (September to February, or March to June) except for the summer funding. A summer program must be listed on the Summer Invoice but can be prepaid in the March to June period.
- Carry-over expenses: Please contact the Special Needs Project regarding the possibility of carrying a large, single item expense over three periods. This must be pre-approved. Receipts will be required.

15. Is there additional coverage available for vitamins?

To be eligible for 80% coverage for medically necessary vitamins for their child with special needs, members must:

- a.** be part of the Special Needs Project;
- b.** be accessing the Extended Health Care Benefits (drug plan); and
- c.** have a child who requires medically necessary vitamins which have a DIN or NPN (drug identification number or natural product number)



To apply for additional coverage:

1. Obtain a prescription from your doctor for the vitamins that are medically necessary for your child. The prescription is for the pharmacist.
2. Request a Vitamin Benefit Form from the Special Needs Project or download it from the website:
www.specialneedsproject.ca.
3. Send the completed Vitamin Benefit Form to the Special Needs Project.

Canada Life will flag your child's file so that when a prescription is filled for the approved vitamins the computer will automatically identify that you will be reimbursed at 80%.

The above process must be repeated if there is a change to the brand of vitamin or additional vitamins are needed.

16. What happens when a child turns 18 or starts receiving adult services?

Children with disabilities are eligible for the Special Needs Project up to, and including, the month they turn 18 or until they start receiving adult services. They may then be eligible for the Moving On Project, which provides support to members whose adult children (over age 18) are “dependent on their parents for care”. The criteria for eligibility under the Moving On Project are different from those for the Special Needs Project. All potential members must complete an assessment interview.

Call 1-800-840-5465 for more information.

17. How to reach us

You can reach the Special Needs Office staff by phone, e-mail, fax and the postal service. If you leave a message, we will do our best to contact you as quickly as possible.

CUPW-UPCE/PSAC Special Needs and Moving On Projects

**65 High Street
PO Box 237
Baddeck, Nova Scotia
B0E 1B0**

Toll Free: 1-800-840-5465

Tel: 902-295-1357

Fax: 902-295-2296

E-mail: info@specialneedsproject.ca

Web site: <http://specialneedsproject.ca>

Note that the office operates on Atlantic time.

**We look forward to your participation in the
*Special Needs Project!***



Thank you to the children at Fifth Avenue School Aged Program, at the former Glebe Parents Daycare Centre in Ottawa, for the drawings.