

# Parents of Critically Ill Children Benefits:

## A Guide for Parents with a Newborn Infant in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)

If you are the parent of a baby who is in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, you may be able to receive Parents of Critically Ill Children (PCIC) benefits. You could get PCIC benefits if the specialist medical doctor (usually a neonatologist) confirms your baby has a life-threatening illness or injury that can include acute phases, and for which your care or support is required. The PCIC medical would be completed by the neonatologist or specialist medical doctor to provide this information.

Not all premature babies are considered critically ill; a premature birth alone does not in itself mean parents will be eligible for PCIC benefits. The doctor must be specific as to the condition of the newborn. It is not enough to say on the form that the child is premature. The medical specialist should specify if this child is technologically dependent (eg. Feeding tube or respiratory support) or suffers from another specific condition (eg. Low birth weight, heart condition)

Depending on your job situation and, in the case of a mother, your own medical condition, there may be other benefits for which you could apply. Please contact the Human Resources at your place of employment, the social worker (if available,) at your hospital or institution or a Service Canada Representative for help as to which benefit or program is most appropriate for you.

Below, we have included general information on Parents of Critically Ill Children benefits, instructions on how to apply for the benefits, and information on what to do when ready to claim maternity and/or parental benefits.

### General Information

#### 1) Am I eligible for Parents of Critically Ill Children (PCIC) benefits?

##### a) Insured employees

You may receive Employment Insurance (EI) special benefits for Parents of Critically Ill Children (PCIC) for up to 35 weeks if you have to be absent from work to provide [care or support](#) to your critically ill or injured child. If you are unemployed and already receiving EI benefits, you can also apply to convert your claim to PCIC benefits. To apply for **Employment Insurance (EI) special benefits for Parents of Critically Ill Children (PCIC)**, **you must [submit an EI application online](#)** as soon as possible after you stop working. If you delay filing your claim by more than four weeks after your last day of work, you may lose benefits.

To be eligible for PCIC benefits, you must be able to show that:

- your regular weekly earnings from work have decreased by more than 40% because you need to provide care or support to your critically ill or injured child. This is referred to as your interruption of earnings.
- you have accumulated 600 insured hours of work in the 52 weeks prior to the start of your claim, or since the start of your last claim, whichever is shorter (this is called the qualifying period)
- you are the parent of a child who is critically ill or injured, and have submitted a PCIC medical certificate, signed by a specialist medical doctor, (i.e. neonatologist) attesting that your child is critically ill and requires your care and support, along with an Authorization to release information form.
- your child was under 18 years of age at the time the 52 week period during which PCIC benefits can be paid starts (based on the date the specialist medical doctor states that your child became critically ill or injured). **Note: If your child turns 18 years of age during the [52-week PCIC window](#), you remain eligible to receive PCIC benefits.**

If any of the above 4 criteria are not met when your application is reviewed, your benefits will be denied.

## **b) Self-employed workers**

You may be eligible to receive PCIC benefits if:

- you have registered for access to EI special benefits for self-employed people and 12 months have passed from the date of your confirmed registration,
- you have reduced the amount of time devoted to your business by more than 40% in order to provide care or support to your critically ill or injured child. This is referred to as your interruption of earnings.
- you have earned a minimum amount of self-employed earnings during the calendar year preceding the year you submit your claim. This amount may change from year to year. You can find the specific applicable yearly minimum on the [Service Canada website](#).
- you are the parent of a child who is critically ill or injured and have submitted a PCIC medical certificate, signed by a specialist medical doctor, (i.e. neonatologist) attesting that your child is critically ill and requires your care and support, along with an Authorization to release information form.
- your child was under 18 years of age at the time the 52 week period during which PCIC benefits can be paid starts (based on the date the specialist medical doctor states that your child became critically ill or injured). **Note: If your child turns 18 years of age during the [52-week PCIC window](#), you remain eligible to receive PCIC benefits.**

If any of the above 5 criteria are not met when your application is reviewed, your benefits will be denied.

## **2) How much will I receive?**

We cannot tell you exactly how much you will receive before Service Canada processes your application. For most people, the basic rate for calculating EI benefits is 55% of your average weekly insurable earnings, up to a maximum amount that is established at the beginning of each year. The applicable yearly amount can be found on the [Service Canada website](#).

## **3) When do my payments start?**

If you are eligible for benefits and have submitted all required documents, your first payment should be issued **approximately 28 days** from the date you applied for benefits.

The normal two-week unpaid waiting period for EI benefits applies to PCIC benefits. However, the waiting period may have already been served on the claim when converting from another type of benefit. When benefits for the same child are shared between parents, only one parent will have to serve the waiting period.

## **4) What will happen if I work or receive other payments during my benefit period?**

### **When you work**

- Normally if you work while receiving PCIC, you can earn up to **\$50 per week** or **25% of your weekly benefit**, whichever is higher. We will deduct any money earned above that amount dollar for dollar from your benefits.

However, until August 6, 2016, a Working While on Claim pilot project is in place which changes the way your weekly EI parental benefits are treated should you work.

Under this pilot project, once the waiting period has been served, claimants are able to keep 50 cents of their benefits for every dollar they earn while on claim, up to 90 per cent of the weekly insurable earnings used to calculate the EI benefit amount. Any earnings above the 90% threshold are deducted dollar-for-dollar.

When you work and receive benefits at the same time, you must **not** combine the hours and earnings of more than one week. It is essential that you report your work earnings and hours in the week you actually worked.

If you notice that you made an error on your report (for example, if you forgot to report some work hours or you did not report them in the right week), tell us immediately so that we can make the necessary corrections.

## **5) How long will I receive PCIC benefits?**

If you are eligible to receive PCIC benefits, you may receive **up to 35 weeks** of benefits during the [52-week PCIC window](#). The weeks of PCIC benefits can be paid in consecutive weeks or spread out over the [52-week PCIC window](#) as long as it falls within your benefit period.

The number of weeks you are entitled to receive is based on the medical certificate. If your child requires care or support after the period identified in the medical certificate, it is possible to receive further benefits, provided another medical certificate is submitted, and the maximum 35 weeks have not already been paid.

## **6) When will my payments stop?**

Your payments will stop when the first of any of the following occurs:

- the maximum of 35 weeks of PCIC benefits is paid to one or both parents, during the [52-week window](#).
- the [52-week window](#) expires.
- the critically ill child no longer requires the care or support of a parent, or passes away
- the maximum combined PCIC and other types of EI benefits is paid on your claim.

## **7) What are my responsibilities while receiving this benefit?**

While receiving PCIC benefits, you must continue to meet the eligibility criteria. You must also agree to promptly notify Service Canada when any of the following occurs:

- you return to work
- your child is no longer critically ill or injured, or passes away
- you receive earnings while receiving benefits

If you do not notify Service Canada of these changes when they occur, it may result in an overpayment that will have to be repaid.

## **8) Can I share PCIC benefits?**

PCIC benefits can be shared between parents, either at the same time or separately, up to a combined maximum of 35 weeks during the [52-week window](#). If both parents share the benefits, there is no need to obtain a second medical and attestation; we will use the same medical which was submitted when the initial parent's claim was established.

### **9) What if more than one child is critically ill or injured?**

If more than one child is critically ill or injured **as a result of the same event**, only one 52-week window may be established and a maximum of 35 weeks of benefits can be paid during that window.

If more than one child is critically ill or injured **as a result of unrelated events**, separate [52-week windows](#) may be established for each child. However, the maximum number of weeks of PCIC benefits that can be paid is 35 per child during each [52-week window](#). This means that two parents could each establish a benefit period for one child each and each parent can receive up to 35 weeks of benefits. You cannot receive benefits for two separate children, at the same time.

Generally, in the case of a multiple birth there would only be one PCIC window established and the maximum of 35 weeks of benefits could be shared between each parent. Should PCIC benefits be payable for each child (children have unrelated illnesses), a separate medical and attestation would be required for each child.

### **10) What if my critically ill or injured child resides outside Canada?**

You may be eligible to receive PCIC benefits if you must leave Canada to provide care or support for your critically ill or injured child. In this situation, you must submit the PCIC medical certificate completed by a specialist medical doctor who is licensed to practice medicine in Canada providing the same information that is required for a critically ill or injured child residing in Canada.

### **11) Can my PCIC benefits be extended?**

If the period set out on the initial medical certificate was underestimated, the specialist medical doctor can issue a second medical certificate to extend the length of time for which the child requires your care or support. You will not have to re-qualify for a new claim to receive additional weeks of benefits, to the maximum of 35 weeks of PCIC benefits payable in the 52-week PCIC window.

***Example of extension within the [52-week window](#)***

*A medical certificate is issued when your child becomes critically ill or injured and the doctor estimates that your child will recover in ten weeks. However, there are unforeseen complications.*

*Upon re-assessment of your child, the doctor estimates that your child requires a further four weeks of your care or support in order to recover. You could get a medical certificate to that effect and receive additional benefits. **An attestation to release information must be completed and submitted with every PCIC medical.***

## **12) What if I need more than 35 weeks of PCIC benefits after the 52-week window has expired**

If you wish to receive further PCIC benefits after the [52-week PCIC window](#) expires, you must apply for these benefits again and meet all the qualifying conditions and [eligibility requirements](#). This includes having accumulated another 600 hours of insurable employment in the previous 52 weeks or since the start of your last claim (whichever is the shorter), to establish a new claim, and providing a new medical certificate stating that your child is critically ill, with a life-threatening illness or injury and requires your care and support.

## **How do I apply for PCIC?**

### **13) How to apply**

To apply for EI PCIC benefits, you must [submit an EI application online](#) as soon as possible after you stop working. If you delay filing your claim by more than four weeks after your last day of work, you may lose benefits. If you are already receiving another type of EI benefit, and wish to convert to PCIC benefits, you must still submit an application online. Complete your application at this link <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/ei/application/employmentinsurance.shtml>

### **14) What documents do I need to provide?**

Once you apply for PCIC benefits, you must submit:

- A PCIC [medical certificate](#) completed and signed by a specialist medical doctor attesting that your child is critically ill or injured and requires your care or support. A "specialist medical doctor" is a medical doctor who is licensed to practice medicine in Canada as a specialist.

- A completed and signed [Authorization to Release a Medical Certificate](#) form, to authorize the release of the medical information. Doctors are not authorized to release medical information about a third party without prior consent.
- Your Record of Employment (ROE), unless your employer has already submitted it electronically. If the Serial number on your ROE does not start with an S or W, you must submit your ROE by mail or in person at a [Service Canada Centre](#).

**Note:** Please ensure to indicate your SIN (Social Insurance Number) on each document you submit to Service Canada, to ensure it can be matched to your claim.

**15) If I receive PCIC benefits for a critically ill newborn, will I automatically receive maternity and/or parental benefits following my PCIC benefits?**

No. You must request maternity and/or parental benefits in order to receive them. The maternity range can be extended for every week the child is hospitalized up to a maximum of 52 weeks. If you had already requested maternity benefits prior to your PCIC, you can usually convert your claim by calling 1-800-206-7218 (TTY: 1-800-529-3742) or visiting your local Service Canada Centre. If you had not previously requested maternity and /or parental benefits prior to collecting your PCIC benefits, you can call the above number to request a conversion and then will need to submit a ([Maternity and/or Parental benefits Annex 3](#)) or you can apply on-line at <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/ei/application/employmentinsurance.shtml>

**16) Can I receive other types of benefits in the same benefit period after receiving PCIC benefits?**

For most people, EI regular and special benefits (sickness, maternity, parental, compassionate care or PCIC) may be paid within the same benefit period. A combination of more than one type of special benefits may generally be paid up to 50 weeks in a 52 week benefit period.

However, if no regular benefits have been paid in the benefit period, the maximum number of weeks for which benefits may be paid to birth mothers may increase to 102 weeks if maternity and parental benefits are combined with sickness, compassionate care and/or parents of critically ill children benefits. Please note that proof of eligibility is required for each type of benefit.

To find out if you are eligible to receive other types of EI benefits during the same benefit period, call 1-800-206-7218 (TTY: 1-800-529-3742) or visit your local [Service Canada Centre](#).

**17) If I applied for maternity/parental benefits and my child is born with or develops a critical illness, can I receive PCIC benefits?**

If you are in receipt of maternity or parental benefits and your child develops a situation where you require PCIC benefits, you must complete an on-line application for PCIC and submit your PCIC medical and attestation by mail or to your local Service Canada office in order to convert your claim to PCIC. Application can be completed at following link <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/ei/application/employmentinsurance.shtml>

**18) Can PCIC and compassionate care benefits be combined?**

[Compassionate care benefits](#) cannot be paid for the same child during the same period that a PCIC window is in effect. However, if you are eligible for compassionate care benefits, you may be able to receive these benefits after the [52-week PCIC window](#) has closed.

**19)How will I know if my claim has been approved?**

Service Canada will notify you by letter when your claim has been finalized. If your claim is approved and you have opted not to complete bi-weekly reports, you will automatically start to receive your payments, either directly to your bank account or by cheque. Should you need to complete bi-weekly reports, your payment will be issued once your report is received and processed. Should you require further information or wish to check the status of your claim, you may contact Service Canada at 1-800-206-7218.

## **Helpful definitions**

### **Specialist medical doctor**

A "specialist medical doctor" is a medical doctor who is licensed to practice medicine in Canada as a specialist. A general practitioner or family physician would not qualify as a specialist medical doctor. For infants receiving care in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, a neonatologist is usually the specialist medical doctor involved.

### **52-week PCIC window:**

This window begins either on the day the medical certificate is signed by the specialist medical doctor or, if the claim for PCIC benefits is made before the medical certificate is issued, from the date the specialist medical doctor examined the child and certifies that the child was critically ill or injured.

### **Care or support:**

Care or support of a critically ill or injured child is defined as directly providing or participating in the care, or providing psychological and emotional support.

### **Critically ill child:**

A child who is under 18 years of age and has a life-threatening illness or injury that can include various acute phases, and for which continued parental care or support is required. This does not include a child with a chronic illness or condition that is their normal state of health. There must be a significant change from the child's normal or baseline state of health at the time they are assessed by a specialist medical doctor.

### **Parent:**

Means a person who, in law, is a parent including an adoptive parent of a child; has custody of, or in Quebec, parental authority over the child, or is the guardian of or, in Quebec, the tutor to, the child; and individuals with whom a child was placed for the purpose of adoption under the laws governing adoption in the province in which the person resides.