

In Massachusetts the Registry of Motor Vehicles offers handicapped placards for people with the Chronic Fatigue and Immune Dysfunction Syndrome/Myalgic Encephalopathy (CFIDS/ME) who qualify as sufficiently disabled.

The placard allows for parking in designated handicapped parking areas. The placard also allows free parking at meters in Boston (check regulations for other cities and towns). These benefits can be quite important for those who are sufficiently disabled as to need the ability to park closer to supermarkets, places of business, etc.

To apply for a placard or plate (the placard is mobile, so it can be used in different cars), a person with CFIDS/ME must have his or her physician complete a Registry form. The two most important criteria of eligibility as related to CFIDS/ME are as follows: (1) the doctor must state the diagnosis and nature of the impairment which would be to confirm the CFIDS/ME diagnosis. The doctor would also provide information on the prognosis of the illness (how long it is expected to last) and on its severity; (2) The doctor must confirm that the patient cannot move more than 200 feet. The Registry emphasizes that the mobility issue is of prime importance and must be documented by the physician. If the Registry gets only partial information, it will have to ask for a more complete evaluation. The essential focus for approval is for the physician to explain exactly how the patient is impaired: how easily, quickly, or unexpectedly the patient tires, and the extent of weakness and its direct effect on the lower extremities.

Note: With many patients, there are some days a person might be able to walk the 200 feet, but then suffer substantial after-effects—including relapse of substantial symptoms—so walking the distance is medically too risky. Again, the person might be able to walk the distance on some days and not on others, so the person should have the placard; or the distance might be walked but only under conditions of suffering. All these points should be taken up with the persons physician before submitting the Registry form.

Nothing should be submitted to the Registry which might be construed as a medical reason for questioning the persons ability to drive safely.