



Overview - Ontario Works Program

Updated March 2009

Intake and Emergency Assistance

- Where applicants approach the local office by walk in, they are given an intake application form for completion. Where an applicant calls in to apply for assistance, they are directed to an intake worker who will input their basic information in the provincial database. All walk in or telephone applicants will be contacted within 48 hrs for an appointment and will be seen within 4 working days from time of application. Where an applicant is in need of emergency assistance they will be seen on the same day where appropriate.
- In instances where individuals require services other than Ontario Works financial or employment assistance, we have a host of information in our Resource Centre to direct individuals to the nearest agency that can assist them with their needs. If required, we make additional efforts to find out if and where other services are available in the community to assist an individual with their immediate needs.
- Some communities have local food bank and non-profit organizations that assist individuals who are in need. Through our Healthy Communities Fund, we have provided dollars to these organizations where they are meeting a local gap in service to individuals in need. The Healthy Communities Fund includes dollars provided by the Province under the Homelessness Program, Energy Fund and Rent Bank. The Healthy Communities Fund is seamless to applicants although the DSSAB does ensure all program requirements and funding limits under all three funding envelopes are adhered to.

Victims of Domestic Violence

- Presently the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB offers referral services for victims of domestic violence to organizations such as; Genevra House, Haven House, Mental Health Clinics and Subsidized Housing. Each office has a directory listing of local resources available in their communities.
- The DSSAB has a policy to temporarily defer Participation requirements initially for twelve months in order to allow these participants to attend counseling

sessions and meet with their local professionals to enable them to become well mentally and physically before entering a job search or educational program.

- Through Community Start-Up and Maintenance Allowance the participant can access monies for moving expenses, rent deposits, hydro deposits and household furnishings with some type of verification from a professional that the participant is required to move. In many cases, a counselor will simply issue a letter to the Case Manager supporting the move of the participant.

Participation Management

- Upon application for Ontario Works several mandatory documents are explained to the participant and signed. One of the documents is a Participation Agreement. This document is essentially a plan for the participant to meet the shortest route to employment which is comprised of several different activities. The document is tailored for each individual participant's needs.
- The first activity is a mandatory Employment Information Session which is hosted by the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB. In most cases, this session incorporates a Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) session.
- The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB offers numerous courses such as Emergency First Aid, CPR, Automated External Defibrillation, Safe Food Handling, WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System), Chainsaw Certification, Smart Serve, True Colors, Boater Safety, Traffic Control, Team Excellence, Service Excellence, Communication Excellence, Self Excellence and Ethical Excellence. The courses are offered free of charge to all Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients.
- Referrals can also be made to local organizations such as Cambrian College, Sudbury Vocational Resource Centre, College Boreal, Alpha en Partage.
- A current resume is required for each participant. If the participant is not able to provide one, a referral can be made to an organization mentioned above in order to assist the participant with the task of completing their resume. A copy of the participant's resume remains on their corporate OW file.
- The Participation Agreement can also consist of job searching, educational programs, community placements, employment placements and addictions rehabilitation.

Family Support

- Upon application each Case Manager completes a Declaration of Support and Maintenance with the participants. This document gives information on the former spouse and/or parent of the child(ren) on the Ontario Works budget.

- The Case Manager sends a copy of this form to our local Family Support Worker who monitors the activity of the support and custody file.
- The Family Support Worker attends Family Court on a regular basis on behalf of the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB.
- The support in pay is entered in the Provincial Database Service Delivery Model Technology (SDMT). If there is no support in pay, there may be a need for an assignment of support, which is also entered on SDMT. Support assignments are registered with the Family Responsibility Office (FRO).
- In cases of the absent person (payor) having no ability to provide support; or is an ongoing Ontario Works client; or an ongoing Ontario Disability Support Program client or is a victim of family violence, a temporary waiver may be necessary.
- In cases of proven abuse or the death of a respondent, a permanent support waiver may be necessary.

Child Care

- The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB continues to provide Child Care funding within the District of Sudbury and Manitoulin. The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB is funded under Ontario Works employment to provide formal and informal child care to eligible Ontario Works participants.
- The Ontario Works program also allows gainfully employed participants to deduct either formal or informal child care costs under the Supports to Employment Program provisions. The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB is committed to the strategic management of its child care allocation to support the participation and transition from welfare to work for all Ontario Works participants.
- Consistent with Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB policy, parents will be allowed to determine the child care option of their choice, be it informal or formal care. The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB will allow parents to determine which child care setting they wish to place their children; however, the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB will encourage the use of formal child care where feasible.

Financial Eligibility

- The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB reviews ongoing cases using the Consolidated Verification Process (CVP). This ensures that all participants that require CVP are completed in a timely manner.
- The daily pay list is reviewed by each Case Manager and they must approve the release of all cheques before they are released. As well, the OW Supervisor is also responsible for reviewing the daily pay list and providing final approval

before any cheques are released. This process does limit administrative errors which in turn reduces the creation for overpayments.

- The DSSAB is currently reviewing all overpayments on active files and determining the appropriateness of collection per Ministry guidelines. We are also reviewing terminated cases with overpayments and issuing letters advising participants of the amount owing and payment procedures.
- The DSSAB is using the Enhanced Family Support Initiative (EFSI) funding to provide clerical support to the Family Support Worker (FSW). This allows the FSW more time to negotiate support agreements, attend court to pursue support, defend arrears and review outstanding cases where FSW action is required.
- The DSSAB is using the Eligibility Review Officer (ERO) Enhanced Funding to provide clerical support to the ERO. This allows the ERO more time to investigate outstanding referrals, verify data matches with other provinces and Ministry of Corrections, and assist the FSW in locating the respondent's whereabouts if unknown. The ERO also participates in the CVP process.

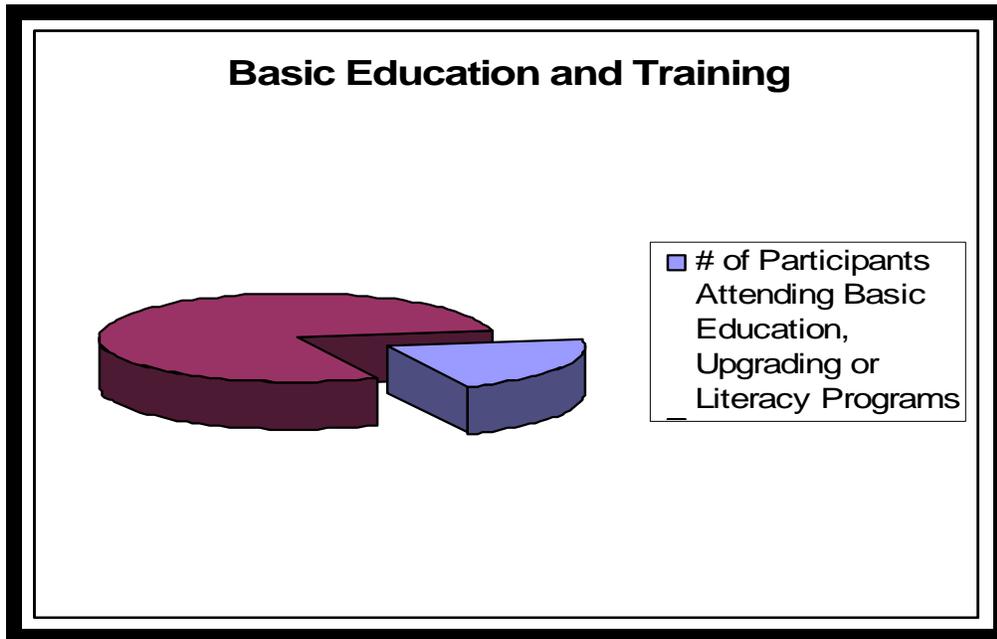
Employment Services

- The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB offers a well-supplied Resource Centre in each of its office locations. This includes resources such as job banks, access to computers with various software programs, internet access, telephones, photocopiers, fax machines, printers and other related materials. Our Resource Centres also offers books on resume writing, job search skills, job boards, and newspapers.
- The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB offers a wide variety of services such as resume writing, job search skills, interview skills, job retention skills and life skills. These workshops, delivered by various community agencies, will assist in assessing participants needs such as literacy and numeracy. This will ensure that appropriate referrals to other community agencies will be made.
- Participants who are currently working full or part-time continue to receive earnings exemptions as outlines in the legislation. They will continue to be assessed by their worker as to the best fit in order to move them forward from Ontario Works to full-time work. Participants working full-time are encouraged to job search for better paying positions and are supported with the training needed to become totally independent of social assistance.
- As for participants working part-time, it is the policy of the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB to not interfere with their current employment unless it is assessed that this is hindering them from ever obtaining total financial independence. Part-time participants will continue to work with their Case Managers to further enhance their skills and their abilities thereby improving their prospects of becoming financially independent. This may include job searching, workshops, training or participating in a Community Placement. All participants working will be assisted

in updating their resumes and skills in order to improve the likelihood of total independence from OW assistance.

Basic Education and Training

During the first quarter of 2008, there was an average of 115 participants attending basic education, upgrading or Literacy programs.



In all of our catchment area, we continue to work well with all High Schools, Literacy Agencies and Local Colleges to ensure that participant's educational needs are met.

Employment Placements

- The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB will continue to develop jobs for its participants in the local job market. The participants will be carefully matched by Case Managers to ensure long-term successful employment. Staff will be available to monitor placements and offer placement services for employer (i.e. screening participants, and offering interviewing space).
- The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB's current position on Enhanced Job Placements (EJP) is to only extend this program to participants who are truly job ready, however, lack the experience to find gainful employment. Our main goal is to find a placement that will ensure the participant's long-term attachment to the labour force without any need for further or future social assistance. It is imperative that the participants who participate in the EJP are carefully screened to ensure a proper match with the employer and ensure success of this program.

- Once placed with employers the staff regularly follows up with the employer and the participant to determine what other support may be required in order to ensure attachment to the labour force.

Community Placements

- The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB encourages Community Placements where appropriate in the participant's field of interest or towards an established goal. Community Placements assist participants to gain new skills, updates to their resume, to try new and different experiences, the opportunity to work within their community and feel productive while networking and gaining valuable references.
- Some of our Community Placements are Self Declared. This Self-Declared Community Placement allows for participants to remain anonymous regarding their financial status with employers/volunteer organization. Self Declared is often found by clients i.e.: a hockey coach.

LEAP

- All participants involved in **Learning, Earning and Parenting Program (LEAP)** are enrolled in a secondary education within their local communities. In addition, our LEAP participants are required to complete a mandatory parenting program. This can be accomplished through the existing parenting programs that are available at local secondary schools. As the school year is coming to a close, the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB ensures that all participants are registered with the local employment agencies in order to obtain summer employment.

Staff Training

The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB continues to provide a range of services to support the key employment outcome strategies, including administrative supports to staff, the streamlining of administrative functions and the cost effective use of goods and services.

Staff training has always been a priority with the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB as we want to ensure staff are always up to date on changes within the Ontario Works Program. Our staff is also educated on the most recent best practices in order to provide quality service to clients. Most recently, management and staff have been registered for Supportive Approaches to Innovative Learning (SAIL) pilots to provide input for future training groups. Once completed, all staff will be attending the final training version. Staff have also been trained in Non Violent Crisis Prevention Intervention, Suicide Prevention Intervention, Communication Workshop and Dealing with difficult clients. The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB continues to engage its staff in training in order to improve client service.

The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB believes in providing a softer approach in dealing with its clients. Ontario Works is a very paper oriented program. In order to give Case Managers more quality time to work closer with their clients, the administrative functions have been streamlined within our offices.

Some of the employment functions have been directed to the Employment Staff. This allows the Employment Staff to work more intensively with client's employment needs and barriers. They are also responsible for working with ODSP spouses and dependant adults that have employment participation requirements. This allows the Case Managers to work more closely with some of the other client's personal needs as well as leaving the more employment ready clients in the hands of the Employment Staff.

Employment Staff have also taken responsibility for meeting those harder to serve clients that require more intensive intervention. These clients, with multiple barriers, generally require more dedicated resources. Some of the harder to serve clients are referred to the Intensive Case Management model and this allows the Case Manager more time to work with other clients.

The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB also uses service providers when it is more cost effective. We have purchased several programs such as Focus for Change and Quick Start as this is more cost effective than dedicating DSSAB staff for programs that run three to eight weeks.

We continue to look for ways that will improve current services by being open-minded.