Appendix 7: Ontario Disability Support Program Branch Bulletin

Ministry of
Community and
Social Services

Ministère des
Services sociaux
et communautaires

Ontario

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REVISED

ODSP Policy Bulletin 008-2002 – March 25, 2003

Memorandum To: Regional Directors
ODSP Program Managers

From: Debbie Moretta
Director, Ontario Disability Support Program

Re: Homelessness Rent Supplement Program
– Ontario Works/ODSP Option

Please note this bulletin – ODSP Policy Bulletin 008-2002 Revised – replaces in its entirety ODSP Policy Bulletin 008-2002, issued June 18, 2002, effective immediately .

This bulletin outlines the changes that have been made to the Ontario Works/ODSP Rent Supplement Option. This option has been revised based on advice of a provincial-municipal focus group. Changes have been made to the implementation details as follows:

- Eligibility: recipients must have rental costs that exceed 30% of income (previously it was 50%).
- Treatment of Rent Supplement: supplement to be treated in the same manner as RGI (rent-geared-to-Income) housing. Directive 0401-01 should be referenced when determining shelter costs for Ontario Disability Support Program recipients. Previously, the supplement was treated as income.

CONTEXT

On February 12, 2002, MMAH announced changes to the Homelessness Rent Supplement Program to make it more responsive to local needs. The changes are designed to provide service managers with greater flexibility in responding to local needs so that more people can be assisted under the homelessness rent supplement program.

As part of this increased flexibility, service managers are able to select rent supplement households through referrals from organizations that work with the homeless or from support service agencies (e.g., Violence Against Women shelters).

It also includes a targeted Rent Geared to Income (RGI) supplement option for Ontario Works participants and ODSP recipients with employment income, where the supplement would be the bridge off assistance.

Key features of the Ontario Works/ODSP Option include:

- Recipients with employment earnings and rental costs that exceed 30% of income are eligible.
- Rent assistance may be provided through a regular rent supplement unit, through an agreement with a landlord or by providing direct Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance to the household.
- Employment assistance through Ontario Works may be extended for up to a year after exit from assistance. ODSP recipients are eligible for extended employment support through ODSP Employment Supports.

IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS

Eligibility

To be eligible for the Homelessness Rent Supplement – Ontario Works/ODSP Option participants must:

- Have employment earnings.
- Have rental costs that exceed 30% of their gross earned income.
- Exit social assistance (i.e., become ineligible for financial assistance as a result of receiving the rent supplement).

Once a service manager has identified that they are implementing the OW/ODSP option, CMSM staff will contact the regional ODSP Manager with the number of available units. Local ODSP staff should review cases within their local office to identify eligible recipients and assess whether this option is beneficial to the ODSP recipient.

Treatment of the Rent Supplement

The supplement is to be treated in the same manner as RGI (rent-geared-to-Income) housing. Directive 0401-01 should be referenced when determining shelter costs for Ontario Disability Support Program recipients. Previously, the supplement was treated as income.

RAPID REINSTATEMENT

ODSP recipients who become ineligible for income support due to excess income from employment can be rapidly reinstated to ODSP if their job does not work out.

Grandparented ODSP recipients must be off ODSP income support for less than 12 months in order to be eligible for rapid reinstatement. Non-grandparented ODSP recipients can be reinstated at any time as long as they reapply prior to their next scheduled medical review date determined by the DAU (if any).

EXTENDED EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Extended ODSP employment supports will be made available to ODSP income support recipients who are exiting social assistance through the rent supplement of the Ontario Works/ODSP Option to help maintain employment and improve earnings.

The full range of eligible goods and services available under the employment supports component of ODSP may be provided based on an approved Employment Plan to help the person secure and maintain employment.

In addition, clients who are working but require employment supports to assist them to reduce their reliance on social assistance may be provided disability-related job accommodations for up to one year if required, notwithstanding the employer's obligation to accommodate. Consistent with current guidelines, the Employment Support Specialist must determine whether or not the employer is able to provide the required accommodations before approving funding. (For details, see attached revised Directive 103-02: Requests for Services from People Who Are Already Employed or with Firm Job Offers and Directive 102-02: Eligibility and Application Process under this section on "Employed Applicants".)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

If you have any questions, please contact Michael Melo at (416) 326-3527.

Please ensure that this bulletin is shared with the Income Support Managers.

Original Signed by

Debbie Moretta

Director

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C. Lees, ADM, Program Management Division
C. McMullin, Director, Ontario Works Branch
M. Campbell, Director, Social Assistance and Municipal Operations
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