



Ontario Works Program Update

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Agenda

- ▶ Ontario Works Service Plan Update
- ▶ Updated Performance Outcomes
- ▶ General Program Update
- ▶ Where do we go from here?

Service Plan Process

- ▶ Updated Service Planning Process with Ministry
- ▶ 2024 is a pilot year of new process
- ▶ Anticipating multi-year plan starting in 2025
- ▶ Service Plan submitted to Ministry with budget submission on March 1, 2024

Updated Performance Outcomes

- ▶ Starting in 2024, municipalities who have launched Employment Services Transformation (EST) are reporting on the following performance outcomes:
 - ▶ Percentage of Ontario Works adults and ODSP non-disabled adults with participation requirements that have a valid Action Plan created
 - ▶ Percentage of Ontario Works adults and ODSP non-disabled adults with mandatory participation requirements who are referred to Employment Ontario
 - ▶ Percentage of Ontario Works Cases (individuals or family units) that exited to employment
 - ▶ Percentage of Ontario Works Cases (individuals or family units) who exit the program from any reason and returned within one year

General Program Update

- ▶ **Role of Municipal Service Delivery Partner**
 - ▶ **Shift from administrative responsibilities to delivery of person-centred supports:**
 - ▶ System navigation
 - ▶ Counselling for goal development
 - ▶ Providing supports to reduce barriers to achieving goals
 - ▶ Community based referrals
 - ▶ **Common Assessment Tools**
 - ▶ Standardized questions to support referral to employment resources
 - ▶ Mental Health & Addictions Screening tool

General Program Update continued

- ▶ Staffing Model at a local level
 - ▶ Focused case management staffing on emerging needs of community
 - ▶ In 2023, an Ontario Works Youth Caseworker position was added to the staffing using existing administrative budget
 - ▶ Currently, there are 9 Ontario Works Caseworker positions, supporting both the Ontario Works caseload and discretionary requests for ODSP
 - ▶ Continuing to review staffing needs based on Ministry program changes (such as Centralized Intake and Employment Services Transformation)

General Program Update Continued

- ▶ Social Assistance in Ontario is a critical piece to overall health of the community
 - ▶ Connection to Homelessness, Housing, Employment
- ▶ Ontario Works Rates have not been increased since October 2018
 - ▶ A single recipient of General Welfare received \$663 in 1993
 - ▶ A single recipient of Ontario Works receives \$733 in 2024
- ▶ Ontario Works Administration costs have remained frozen since 2018
- ▶ Ontario Works Act has over 400 rules relating to eligibility that require a high level of administration
 - ▶ Taking away caseworker time from more critical interactions that can lead to better outcomes

Ontario Works Program Update

Timeline

- ▶ Office of the Auditor General of Ontario (1998, 2002, 2009, 2015, 2018)
 - ▶ 5 Value-for-Money reports focusing on deficiencies with program administration, outcome delivery and technology inadequacies
- ▶ Provincial-Municipal Fiscal & Service Delivery Review (2008)
 - ▶ Uploading of municipal costs back to province over 10-year period starting in 2008
- ▶ Commission on the Reform of Ontario Public Services “Drummond Report” (February 2012)
 - ▶ Recommended consolidation of OW and ODSP into a single program delivered at local/municipal level
- ▶ Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario “Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario” (2012)
 - ▶ Recommendations for simplified services, ensure provision of adequate benefits, and labour market engagement to optimize client outcomes
- ▶ Social Assistance Modernization (2016 – 2021)
 - ▶ Targeted implementation of enhancements to the delivery of social assistance related to technology and ease of access

Ontario Works Program Update

Timeline continued

- ▶ Income Security Reform – “A Roadmap for Change” (2017)
 - ▶ Updated plan to implement reforms to Social Assistance, including targeted rate increases and a focus on stability supports
- ▶ Basic Income Pilot (2018 – 2019)
 - ▶ In pilot communities, issuing a livable income to individuals and families without attaching eligibility to participation
- ▶ Employment Services Transformation (2019, launched 2021)
 - ▶ Prototype removal of employment delivery from municipalities, with focus at a local level on person centred services
- ▶ Centralized Intake (launched 2020)
 - ▶ Provincial centralization of application process intended to free up administrative work at municipal level
- ▶ Social Assistance Recovery & Renewal (2021, currently paused)
 - ▶ To create an efficient, effective and streamlined social services system that addresses barriers and moves people toward employment and independence

Where do we go from here?

- ▶ Advocacy at the provincial level to raise the rates of Ontario Works
- ▶ Promotion at the provincial level to implement changes and reforms that will reduce administrative burden
- ▶ Continued participation in networks, such as OMSSA, Service Manager Networks, Regional ODSP & Provincial Program Supervisors/Managers
- ▶ Maintain support for the work done by the front-line staff in helping people meet their goals and succeed in our community

Questions?

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