

## **Applying for the Ontario Disability Employment Support Program (ODSP)**

Clients can apply for the Ontario Disability Employment Support Program after their sixteenth birthday, by contacting the ODSP office in Mississauga at 905-897-3100 (Toll free: 1-800-361-0897 or TTY 905-897-3109), or in Burlington at 905-637-4500 (Toll Free: 1-800-567-6388 or TTY 905-681-0720). Individuals applying for ODSP must qualify both medically and financially.

The ODSP Employment Supports program works with community service providers to help people with disabilities prepare for and find jobs, keep a job and advance their career. The program can also help people with disabilities become self-employed. ODSP Employment Supports help people who have a wide range of disabilities.

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible for Employment Support under the ODSP, you must:

- Be 16 years of age or older;
- Be a resident of Ontario; and,
- Have a disability that is expected to last a year or more, and your disability makes it hard for you to find or keep a job.
- If you are above the age of 18 and receive ODSP you are automatically qualified for Employment Supports
- Keep in mind that there may be a fee attached if you are from the age of 16-18.

### **Helpful hints:**

- When filling out the forms in the Disability Determination Package, it is important to stress the things one cannot do, and needs help with, because of the disability. Negative descriptive words should be used. Qualifying medically for ODSP depends on the forms being completed by a qualified professional and on accompanying, supportive documentation being provided where available.
- If an application for ODSP is refused based on a decision that the applicant does not meet the definition of a person with a disability, the applicant can appeal the decision.
- To appeal the decision, the applicant should first request an Internal Review by sending a hand-written letter to the Disability Adjudication Unit. The letter should state why the applicant disagrees with the decision. Additional medical information can also be provided as part of the Internal Review. It is best if the letter is written by the applicant and not edited by a parent.
- If the Internal Review is refused, the applicant can continue the appeal process by requesting a Social Benefits Tribunal Hearing. The Social Benefits Tribunal (SBT) is an independent body whose mandate is to provide an applicant with the opportunity to appeal decisions affecting eligibility for ODSP. If the applicant proceeds with the appeal, a formal hearing will be scheduled by the SBT. At the hearing both the applicant and the Ministry representative will be allowed to present their case in writing, in person, or in both.

- The Applicant is allowed to have a support person accompany them to the hearing. Others must leave the room and wait to be called as witnesses. Applicants are asked questions related to their disability and its impact on their activities of daily living, on their employability and on their ability to be involved in the community. It may help if they have received Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities in the past, or if they use Transhelp. It is important to be honest, of course, but it is wise to stress one's limitation. It can be helpful to have other supportive professionals either present to testify, or at least to write supportive letters.
- Applicants who are refused still have the option of contacting their Member of Provincial Parliament and/or to continue their advocacy efforts with the help of Advocacy Resource for the handicapped, etc.
- Applicants may ask for members of the Youth Advisory committee or of the Mentorship group to accompany them to the Tribunal for support. Applicants can contact Legal Aid or a Legal Clinic in the community and ask for assistance with their appeal to the Social Benefits Tribunal.

**Legal Services**

A Legal Resource for Persons with Disabilities (ARCH)	416-482-1254
North Peel & Dufferin Community Legal Services	905-455-0160
Halton Community Legal Services	905-877-5256
Law Society of Upper Canada: Lawyer Referral Service	416-947-3330
Mississauga Community Legal Services	905-896-2050
Ontario Legal Aid Plan, Halton Region	905-845-7591
Justice for Children & Youth	416-920-1633