

Ministry of Community  
and Social Services

Ministère des Services  
sociaux et communautaires

Ministry of Children  
and Youth Services

Ministère des Services  
à l'enfance et à la jeunesse

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December 7, 2005

MEMORANDUM TO: Executive Directors  
Developmental Services Providers

FROM: Marilyn Renwick, Regional Director

RE: Policy Changes for the Special Services at Home (SSAH) Program

I am pleased to provide you with information regarding two recent policy changes to the Special Services at Home (SSAH) program.

In 1982, the Ministry introduced the SSAH program as part of the Ministry's commitment to help children with a developmental disability live at home with their families. It was later extended to include adults with a developmental disability, as well as children with a physical disability. The program provides individualized funding, on a time-limited basis, to purchase supports not available elsewhere in the community including personal development and growth, and/or family relief and support.

In recent years, many families and service providers have told the Ministry that they would like a more responsive program; one that reflects the contemporary reality that more people with a developmental disability are moving from the family home to live more independently in the community. They have also asked that new policies preserve the "family unit" by providing caregivers with more flexibility and choice in how SSAH funds may be used. To this end, the Ministry has updated the policies for the SSAH program.

The Special Services at Home program has now undergone two policy changes:

Eligibility for SSAH funding is expanded to include children with a physical disability and/or a developmental disability or adults who have a developmental disability who are not living at home with their families, and  
Primary caregivers can use their SSAH funding to compensate some family members to provide respite and/or personal development and growth.

.../cont'd.

This first policy change is intended to support children with a physical disability and/or a developmental disability or adults who have a developmental disability when they:  
Move from their families' homes and receive no residential staff support from a transfer payment agency or Outside Paid Resource (OPR);  
Currently live in accommodation outside the family home with no residential staff support from a transfer payment agency or OPR;  
Need to live away from home temporarily, due to family illness or other emergency;  
Are making the transition from their families' home to a group home, Family Home program or other supported accommodation that is provided by the transfer payment system. Individuals may be eligible to receive supports on a time-limited basis to help facilitate the move to their new home.

The SSAH program is not designed to fund supports for activities that are already provided by (or available from) the transfer payment system.

The second policy change is intended to help supplement the support provided by primary caregivers. It may better respond to primary caregivers' needs with respect to culture and language differences, and/or to the needs of families living in rural or remote communities who are not able to use their full allocation of SSAH funding because it is difficult to find and retain support workers. These examples are not however, intended to limit consideration of individual needs and circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

Primary caregivers can now use their SSAH funding to compensate eligible family members to provide services for respite or personal development and growth, with the exceptions of:

Primary caregivers regardless of residence;  
A child under the age of 18;  
Spouse of the individual who has a developmental disability, regardless of residence

Families may still apply for SSAH funding on behalf of their child with a physical disability and/or a developmental disability or adult child with a developmental disability, regardless of where that person resides. Applicants to the SSAH program may also apply on their own, or with help from their case manager/coordinator or adult protective services worker.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Special Services at Home Unit, Toronto Region at 416-325-0623, or you can visit the Ministry of Community and Social Services website (<http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/CFCS/default.htm>) for more information.

Yours sincerely,

*(Original signed by Karen Meehan on behalf of Marilyn Renwick)*

Marilyn Renwick