

Social Policy Development Division
Ontario Works Branch
375 University Avenue, 5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2J5
Tel. (416) 326-8205
Fax: (416) 326-9777

February 10, 2015

MEMORANDUM TO: Ontario Works Administrators
- Municipalities and DSSABs
- First Nations

Social Assistance Operations Division Directors
Social Assistance Program Managers
Program Supervisors

FROM: Jeff Butler
Director, Ontario Works Branch

SUBJECT: **Postponed Implementation of the Employment-Related Benefit**

As you are aware, in the 2014 Ontario Budget, as part of ongoing efforts to reform social assistance, the province announced that it would be replacing seven existing Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) employment benefits with a simple discretionary benefit in each program. The benefits being replaced are:

- Employment-related expenses (Ontario Works)
- Other employment and employment assistance activities benefit (Ontario Works)
- Full-time employment benefit (Ontario Works)
- Vocational training (Ontario Works)
- Work-related benefit (ODSP)
- Employment training and start-up benefit (ODSP)
- Employment transition benefit (ODSP)

Over the last several months, the ministry has engaged with Ontario Works municipal and First Nations delivery partners (along with other key ODSP stakeholders), to obtain input on the design and delivery of the Employment-Related Benefit (ERB). The ministry is still finalizing some details of the new ERB in social assistance.

Replacing seven different employment benefits is a complex process and represents a major change for social assistance clients - particularly for people getting support from ODSP - for staff and for our municipal and First Nations partners who deliver these employment related benefits.

The ministry recognizes that front-line staff are continuing to make significant efforts to support our transition to Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) and wants to take a balanced approach as we continue to improve the delivery of our programs. We also recognize the feedback that we have received from front-line staff and our municipal delivery partners regarding the difficulty in implementing this change for April 1st.

To give everyone involved the time needed to be ready for these important changes, we have made the decision to postpone the implementation of the ERB until October 2015. All of the current employment-related benefits will continue to be available until the ERB is implemented.

We will provide further information regarding the ERB in the near future, including decisions around the allocation model in Ontario Works as well as changes to service planning and budgeting.

To support the October 2015 implementation, the ministry will be sharing standard communication and orientation products for Ontario Works Administrators; issuing new guidelines for ERB and revised products (e.g. policy directives, service planning guidelines, budget submission packages and Joint Implementation Planning guidelines); and providing staff with training and support tools. Regional sessions may also be organized with ODSP partners to share information, establish clear referral processes and solidify working relationships between Ontario Works and ODSP offices.

Please ensure that this memo and the attached Key Messages and Q&As are distributed to staff within 48 hours.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Karen Smits at karen.smits@ontario.ca or at 416-326-6683.

Regards,

Jeff Butler

Attachments (2)

- c. Gloria Lee, A/Director, ODSP Branch
- Elizabeth Roy, Manager, Ontario Works Branch
- Kira Heineck, OMSSA
- Staci Williams, ONWAA
- FN Technology Providers
- Clinic Resource Centres