

September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016

Today, the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) made an important announcement that will have a positive impact on adults with developmental disabilities across the province. As you will see from Minister Helena Jaczek's [press release](#), "*Persons deemed eligible for ministry-funded adult developmental services under the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008 (SIPDDA), will no longer have to go through a second disability determination process to be eligible to apply for income support through ODSP.*"

This new directive has important practice implication for psychologists across the province since the psychological diagnosis of intellectual disability is a necessary first step to obtain supports by Developmental Services Ontario (DSO). Psychological assessment reports further assist clients determining the nature of individuals' neurocognitive and psychological impairments and its impact on functioning; assisting discharge/treatment planning; documenting a client's disability status for the purpose of obtaining benefits and/or for legal purposes (e.g. to enable court diversion when appropriate or to support ODSP, federal disability applications); alerting caregivers to the need for accommodation in services, and make recommendations for support.

From a homelessness perspective, the directive will provide much needed relief by reducing unnecessary burden and stress on cognitively impaired patients whose disability makes it extremely difficult to see a physician or psychologist in the community. In addition, patients on Ontario Works (OW) could see wait times to receive ODSP reduced from months to weeks and their monthly income doubled with ODSP. The new directive will also reduce the work load of psychologists and physicians who will now be able to focus their time and energy on other clients in need instead of filling up paper work.

As we stated in a recent [letter](#) to the Ontario Ombudsman following his report "[Nowhere to Turn](#)", numerous challenges remain. A recent investment by MCSS's housing Taskforce has for the first time made it possible to connect a number of highly vulnerable homeless clients to DSO. The triage and clinical screening work that has begun to occur at Inner City Family Health Team suggests that about 18-25% of the homeless population in Toronto alone are suspected of having a developmental disability by their primary case worker. While only half of these will ultimately be diagnosed with an intellectual disability, it underscores the need for psychological screening among the homeless population. Our partnership with the Ministry of Community and Social Services' Developmental Services Ontario Toronto Region (DSO-TR) program and Surrey Place has allowed the project team to admit an individual into the DSO program quickly. Immediately providing ODSP and Passport funding to persons with disabilities will maximize their recovery process, assist with housing and ultimately allow them to become engaged in their communities.

The Ontario Psychological Association will continue to work collaboratively with the Minister's office, and more broadly with the Ontario Government, to find practical and cost effective solutions that will support poor and vulnerable Ontarians. This includes advocating for:

- 1) more flexible and purposeful passport funding, a program to support community participation, activities of daily living and person-directed planning for homeless men and women with disabilities;
- 2) strategic investment in supported housing with 24-hour on-site support;
- 3) increased access to psychologists in Family Health Teams and Community Health Centres to provide rapid and reliable diagnoses and recovery options for persons with disabilities.

We hope today's announcement is one of many to come and we wish to thank the Ministry of Community and Social Services for this important decision.



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p.s. Please consider spreading the good news on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Linked-In](#).

Cc Dr. Helena Jaczek, Minister of Community and Social Services  
Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.  
Mr. Chris Ballard, Minister of Housing and Poverty Reduction Strategy  
Mr. Michael Coteau, Minister of Children and Youth Services  
Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario