

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM - EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

DIRECTIVE 4.3

EXCEPTIONAL WORK-RELATED DISABILITY SUPPORTS

SUMMARY OF DIRECTIVE

To describe the goods and services that may be funded under exceptional work-related disability supports in order to remove or reduce disability related barriers to competitive employment.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

[Sections 32 \(1\) of the ODSP Act 1997](#)
[Section 4 of the Regulation](#)

INTENT OF POLICY

To recognize the varying levels of client support needs and ensure that clients with more complex barriers receive the goods and services they need to prepare for, obtain and retain competitive employment

APPLICATION OF POLICY

ODSP Employment Supports provides assistance to clients with a wide range of disability types and severity, employment barriers and support needs. Some clients will require intensive, high-cost supports or higher levels of support over an extended period of time in order to become employed. Funding is available for exceptional work-related disability supports for clients who have more complex employment barriers.

Exceptional work-related disability supports can include assistive devices and technical equipment, job specific communication skills training to address disability-related needs (e.g. ASL, Braille, remedial writing for learning disabled, etc.) and, on-the-job supports such as sign language interpreter, intervenor, reader and notetaker services.

Eligible "Exceptional" Goods and Services

Assistive Devices and Supplies, and Adaptive Technologies

ODSP Employment Supports funding may be provided for a broad range of assistive devices and supplies, and adaptive technology required for employment.

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Assistive devices are used to replace, compensate for, or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities and includes items such as mobility and visual/hearing aids, orthotics/prosthetics, speech devices, dentures, environmental controls, and portable respiratory devices.

Adaptive technology involves modifying standard technical systems for use by people with disabilities and would include computers with access devices, adapted information systems and accessible communication networks.

ODSP Employment Supports funding may be provided for work-related assistive devices and supplies, and adaptive technology where these items are not available through the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Assistive Devices Program (ADP). Clients must access the maximum funding available through ADP before receiving ODSP Employment Supports funding. ODSP Employment Supports will not provide funding toward assistive devices and supplies required solely for activities of daily living or health maintenance (e.g. diabetic supplies, oxygen, etc.)

Description of the Assistive Devices Program (ADP)

ADP provides financial assistance to people with long term disabilities to obtain basic, personalized assistive devices for activities of daily living at home. ADP will not provide funding for assistive devices intended solely for work, school or recreational purposes.

The types of assistive devices and supplies funded under ADP include:

- medical - diabetic supplies, enteral feeding equipment and supplies, ostomy supplies, oxygen and ventilators, respiratory equipment and supplies;
- mobility - orthotic devices, pressure modification devices, prosthetics;
- sensory - communication aids, writing devices, hearing aids, orientation and mobility aids.

Computers

Computer equipment and software may be purchased as an assistive device for communication purposes as a necessary support to participate in job placement and retention activities or self-employment. Service providers should first determine whether the required computer equipment/software is eligible for funding under ADP. Clients who need to use a computer as a communication device because of their disability, may be eligible for funding through ADP if the device is also needed for activities of daily living.

If the client requires an adapted computer or disability-related computer upgrades in the workplace, service providers should determine whether the employer is willing and able to provide this accommodation, as per the requirements of the Ontario Human Rights

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Code. Cost sharing arrangements with the employer should also be explored. ODSP Employment Supports funding may be used to pay the difference between the market value for a regular computer and the cost of a computer with disability-related adaptations/software.

ODSP Employment Supports funding may also be used to cover any outstanding client costs including assistive devices or adaptive technology assessments, the difference between ADP approved amounts and actual cost, additional features or upgrades, maintenance/repairs, installation and set-up, training and user support.

Technology Training

Training on adaptive technology in the use of hardware and software, assistive devices, etc. is essential for clients to derive maximum performance from the technology specific to their needs. The time required for set-up and training on this equipment needs to be considered in developing the employment plan. Approved costs should also cover training and set-up of the equipment.

Job Specific Communication Skills Training

Job specific oral and written communication skills training may be funded for people with sensory, cognitive or learning disabilities in order to bring their functional communication skills up to a level where they are able to perform the essential job duties. Examples include a person with a head injury requiring cognitive retraining in language-specific skills in order to return to employment, an individual who is deaf who needs to improve his/her ASL skills in order to utilize interpreter services on the job, targeted remedial writing skills for someone with a learning disability to perform identified work tasks, etc.

Interpreter/Intervenor/Reader/Notetaker Services

Interpreter and intervenor services may be funded to assist people who are deaf, deafened, hard of hearing or deaf-blind to apply for ODSP Employment Supports, to undertake job preparation and training activities, participate in employment interviews, and to receive time-limited on-the-job support. Interpreter and intervenors services may also be provided for clients to participate in the dispute resolution process.

Service providers will take into consideration the level of qualifications of interpreters and intervenors and the degree of complexity of each assignment. Funding for preparation time, team interpreters, travel costs and written materials may be required.

Alternate means of communication may be more appropriate in certain situations. Some examples are:

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- paid trained notetakers;
- a personalized FM system (device that uses radio transmissions to send sound from the speaker's microphone/transmitter directly to the hard of hearing person's listening device e.g. hearing aids, headphones, etc.);
- captioning services; and
- transcription of tape recorded material

Readers and notetakers may also be required by people with other types of disabilities (e.g. cognitive, visual or physical disabilities) for work-related activities. The use of adaptive technology should also be explored as a means of addressing these needs.

Provision of Exceptional Work-related Disability Supports

Service providers will consider the following factors when determining what exceptional work-related disability supports are required:

- the client's functional abilities and need for disability supports;
- the specific requirements of the workplace training or employment position;
- the environment in which the workplace training or employment will take place (e.g. co-workers, information systems, workplace culture, availability of supports, etc.); and
- whether it is more economical to rent or purchase based on the duration of the workplace training or work situation.

Before providing funding for exceptional work-related disability supports, service providers will need to determine if the client is eligible to receive funding for the required disability supports under a public or private insurance plan, such as those provided to people who are employed or if a spouse has health/dental benefits. In situations where the insurance plan provides partial or minimal coverage for the item, ODSP Employment Supports funding may be used for the difference in costs. The client should provide verification of the goods and services that have been paid for by the insurance plan and what goods and services and costs remain outstanding.

Service providers will be required to keep records of all expenditures for exceptional work-related disability supports purchased for clients including the amount spent, the type of support and frequency of supports provided to clients. ODSP Employment Supports staff will conduct random reviews/audits to ensure the funding is used appropriately and to assist ODSP Employment Supports staff to negotiate future contracts with service providers.

Recycled Equipment

If a client withdraws or terminates participation in ODSP Employment Supports, the service provider may require the client to return the good(s). In making this decision,

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the following factors will be considered:

- whether the item is transferable and may be used by another client;
- whether the person is no longer using the item for its intended purpose;
- whether the person is using the item to participate in activities which will help him/her to work towards an employment goal; or,
- whether the return of the item would create hardship for the client.

Where appropriate, the returned goods may be used by another client. In some cases if the item is still new, the service provider may choose to return it to the original supplier for a refund or credit. In some regions, community agencies have equipment pools where used equipment is returned/donated and loaned out to another client. Regional Offices may want to coordinate the recycling of any unused items provided under ODSP employment supports with these community agencies.

RELATED DIRECTIVES

[2.2 Employed Applicants and Applicants with Job Offers](#)

[4.1 Job Placement](#)

[4.2 Job Retention and Career Advancement](#)

[4.4 Self-Employment Supports](#)

[5.1 Employment Supports Funding](#)

[6.4 Performance Measures and Information Reporting](#)