

DIRECTIVE #2.1: APPLICATION PROCESS

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Sections 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16(1), 24, 25, 41, 44 and 46 of the Act

Sections 1, 3, 4, 5, 14(1), 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 20.1, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28 and 67 of Regulation 134/98.

AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

Applications are on file with all forms completed, signed, and if required, witnessed and/or commissioned.

All information and documentation required to support an eligibility decision has been provided and verified.

APPLICATION OF POLICY

An applicant is a person who applies for assistance or a person on whose behalf an application is made. An application is made for a benefit unit which includes the applicant, his/her spouse and any dependents.

An application for assistance is made in the geographic area where the applicant ordinarily resides. A transient or homeless person is considered to reside in the geographic area where he/she applies for assistance or the geographic area where he/she is a resident of an emergency hostel (see Directive #3.1: Residency Requirements for more information).

Anyone who wishes to apply for assistance under the Act is to be given the opportunity to make an application and have their application reviewed. When the application is completed the Administrator makes a decision regarding his/her eligibility for assistance and communicates the decision in writing.

Preliminary Discussion

The application process begins with a preliminary discussion when an applicant makes initial contact with staff by telephone or in person at a local office.

In some situations it may be impracticable to begin the application process by telephone and staff may determine that the applicant would be better assisted by proceeding directly to an in-person appointment at the local office. Situations may include:

- the applicant is requesting reinstatement to Ontario Works in the month following the month in which the benefit unit was terminated, or the applicant is re-applying for Ontario Works within one year of a previous application (see Directive #2.2: Re-Applications and Reinstatements for more information);
- the applicant is in a crisis or emergency situation that needs to be dealt with immediately (see Directive #2.3: Emergency Assistance for more information);
- the applicant appears to qualify for rapid reinstatement under the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) or wishes to apply for ODSP and is not in immediate financial need. In these situations the applicant should be referred to the nearest ODSP office (see Directive #2.4: Referrals to the Ontario Disability Support Program for more information);
- the applicant is an active Ontario Works participant who is moving to another delivery agent's geographic area;
- the applicant's responses are difficult to understand;
- the applicant is exhibiting a high level of frustration or difficulty in responding to questions;
- the applicant is unable to communicate in English or, in areas designated under the *French Language Services Act*, in French; or
- the applicant is 16 or 17 years old and does not live with his or her parent(s) (see Directive #3.5: Applicants and Participants under the Age of 18 for more information).

During the preliminary discussion, staff must provide the applicant with information regarding the application process, including eligibility criteria and the documents and information required to complete the application.

Staff must inform applicants that a decision will not be made until the application process is complete.

Voluntary Withdrawal

The applicant is also advised of his/her right to withdraw an application for assistance at any time during the application process and that voluntarily withdrawing an application prior to a determination of eligibility means:

- the application is incomplete;

- the applicant cannot request an internal review and has no rights to appeal as no eligibility decision has been made; and
- the information the applicant has provided will be kept on file and will be available for a new application within one year should the applicant wish to start the application process again.

The withdrawal of the application will be documented, hard copy and electronic files will be closed, and the applicant will receive notice of the file's closure (i.e. "Chose to Discontinue Letter").

Oral Consent

Staff also request oral consent from the applicant, the applicant's spouse, and any dependent adults, to allow for third party verification of income and asset information. Any person may choose not to provide oral consent. In these cases, the application process continues and third party verification is deferred until the intake appointment and the *Consent to Disclose and Verify Information* form is signed.

Scheduling an Intake Appointment

An intake appointment is scheduled at the local Ontario Works office for the completion of the application. The applicant should be advised that he/she may bring a relative, friend, or person from a community group or legal clinic to the intake appointment.

Wherever possible, appointments should be scheduled to allow for a written determination of eligibility, as well as the issuance of assistance to an eligible applicant, within four working days from the point of initial contact.

In scheduling appointments, the needs and circumstances of the applicant should be considered. Applicants who require the services of a translator, cultural interpreter or sign language interpreter should be given sufficient time to arrange for these services. In addition, due to special circumstances an applicant may request that an appointment take place within his/her home, or at another location in the community, rather than at the local Ontario Works office. The Administrator may approve this request where appropriate, with priority given to the health and safety of the applicant and staff (see Directive #2.8: Home Visits for more information).

Administrators also have the flexibility to schedule an intake appointment for an applicant who may be eligible for assistance within the next ten working days, such circumstances may include:

- leaving a hospital or institution such as a long-term care facility;
- being released from a correctional facility;
- moving out of the parental home;
- leaving a residential treatment program;
- leaving a situation of domestic violence; or
- reaching the end of a period of ineligibility.

Intake Appointment

An in-person intake appointment is necessary to complete the application process. During the intake appointment, the applicant is expected to provide required information, and complete and sign the application and all accompanying forms. Staff will verify and record the information provided by the applicant, and will advise the applicant of his/her rights and responsibilities.

Staff will also provide information regarding participation requirements, compliance, the Employment Information Session (EIS) and the Literacy Screening Questionnaire.

Staff should engage the applicant, the applicant's spouse and any dependent adults in a collaborative process to develop individual participation plans, and may, where appropriate, make referrals to other community resources and services.

If an applicant previously received assistance, staff should review the file in advance of the appointment to identify any existing overpayments, non-compliance issues, and any previous participation agreement.

Completing the Application

An application is not complete until the application and all accompanying forms have been completed and signed by the applicant, his/her spouse and, if required, any dependent adult(s) in the benefit unit.

The forms required for an application include:

- Form 0983 – Application for Assistance

- Form 2845 – Participation Agreement (see Directive #2.5: Participation Requirements for more information)
- Form 0985 – Consent to Disclose and Verify Information Form
- Form 1107 – Rights and Responsibilities Form
- Form 2999 – Canada Revenue Agency Consent Form
- All other required forms as applicable (e.g. Form 2764 – Questionnaire for Applicants and Recipients who are Living with Another Adult)

A responsible person may complete and/or sign the application for assistance and accompanying forms on behalf of the applicant or the applicant’s spouse where the applicant or the applicant’s spouse are unable to do so because of a disability. Where the applicant has a trustee, it is the trustee who must sign the application and accompanying forms. In both cases, the applicant is still required to meet with staff in person.

Information to be Provided at Application

Staff must verify and record the information provided by the applicant on the SDMT Verification Checklist or for First Nations, the *Verification Checklist Form* (0499). This is a mandatory form that must be filled out during the application process.

The chart below outlines the information that must be verified during the application process, the types of acceptable documentation and the recording requirements. These are minimum standards at application and delivery agents may require additional documentation depending on the circumstances of the case.

Information to be Verified	Recording Requirements
<p>Social Insurance Number (SIN)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIN Card • Other official documentation showing the SIN (e.g. income tax return) 	<p>Visually verify in technology</p>
<p>Health Number</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) issued Health Card (i.e. photo, non-photo or temporary card) • Other official document showing the health number (e.g. 	<p>Visually verify in technology</p>

<p>letter from the MOHLTC or Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC))</p>	
<p>Proof of Identity and Date of Birth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth Certificate • Religious records (e.g. Baptismal certificate) • Naturalization Certificate • Statement of live birth • MOHLTC issued Health Card (i.e. photo or temporary card) • Confirmation from the Registrar General of birth registration • Valid passport (i.e. Canadian or foreign) • Military record • Valid driver's license • National Registration File of 1940 held by Statistics Canada • Indian band records • Immigration documents (e.g. Record of Landing, Canadian Citizenship Card) • Age of Majority Card 	<p>Original or photocopy on file</p>
<p>Employment Status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record of Employment (ROE) • Pay stubs with year-to-date amounts • Letter of termination from employer 	<p>Visually verify in technology</p>
<p>Income</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly bank statements • Employment receipts • Pay stubs • Income tax assessment (e.g. T4/T5) • Spousal and/or child support records (e.g. support court order, private agreement, divorce settlement, staff accessed Maintenance Enforcement with Computer Assistance (MECA) records) 	<p>Visually verify in technology</p>
<p>Assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bank statements 	<p>Visually verify in technology</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life insurance policies • Funds held in trust • Vehicle ownership registration form • Savings plans 	
<p>Shelter Costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from a landlord • Rental receipt with landlord's name and telephone number • Lease or rental agreement • Mortgage statement or agreement • Loan agreements for the purchase of a principle residence or necessary repairs to a residence • Property tax assessment or proof of property tax payment • Proof of insurance premium payments for fire, dwelling or contents • Proof of common expense fees paid for condominiums or cooperative housing units • Statements or payment receipts for hydro, utilities or heating costs 	<p>Visually verify in technology</p>
<p>Status in Canada</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of Canadian Citizenship • Valid passport • Record of Landing (Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) form IMM 1000) • Permanent Resident Card • Letter issued by CIC verifying permanent resident status • Proof of application for landed immigrant or permanent resident status • Determination of eligibility for refugee status (CIC form IMM 1442 or IMM 5292) • Refugee protection claimant document (CIC Form 1442) • Temporary Resident Permit (CIC form IMM 1442 or IMM 1263) • Other official documentation confirming legal residence in Canada (e.g. Request for Family Class Information (RFCI)) 	<p>Original or photocopy on file</p>

form completed by CIC)	
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Incomplete Information

Where the information necessary for making an eligibility determination is incomplete, the applicant is allowed up to ten working days to obtain and submit the outstanding information.

The accessibility of the information, the amount of control the applicant has over the information, and the time needed to obtain the information are factors that should be considered in setting the time frame. In some cases, the Administrator may allow an applicant with extenuating circumstances (e.g. victim of domestic violence) more than ten working days. It is important that staff ensure the applicant understands his/her responsibility to provide the information within the allotted timeframe, and that failing to provide the required information without reason may result in a decision of ineligibility.

Where an applicant is unable to cover the cost of documentation that is required to verify information requirements, lower-cost options should be considered (e.g. other community agencies). Alternatively, the Administrator may reimburse the applicant for the cost or pay the cost directly to the document provider.

Emergency assistance may be provided in situations where information is outstanding and a decision regarding eligibility has not been made (see Directive #2.3: Emergency Assistance for more information).

Rights and Responsibilities

During the intake appointment, the applicant is advised of his/her rights and responsibilities under Ontario Works. Generally, applicants, their spouses, and any dependent adults are responsible for:

- participating in employment assistance activities and complying with the conditions of eligibility relating to employment assistance;
- making reasonable efforts to seek, accept and maintain employment for which they are physically capable, and that would increase employment income;
- making reasonable efforts to pursue financial resources they or their spouse/dependents may be entitled to or eligible for;
- reporting new and changed circumstances, participation in employment assistance activities, the receipt or disposition of assets, and the receipt or expected receipt of income or some other financial resource; and

- responding promptly to requests for information related to initial or ongoing eligibility.

Applicants should also be advised of their right to appeal a decision regarding initial or ongoing eligibility. Staff will explain the appeal process to the applicant, including the timelines for requesting an internal review, when and under what conditions an appeal can be filed with the Social Benefits Tribunal (SBT), and how he/she may obtain further information about the appeal process (see Directive #10.1: Notice and Internal Review Process and Directive #10.2: Appeal Process for more information).

Referrals to Resources and Services

Pending the completion of the application process, it may be appropriate for staff to refer the applicant to other resources or services in the community such as an emergency hostel or a food bank.

If the applicant has a disability, he/she may be referred to the ODSP. Where the applicant is in immediate financial need, he/she may be eligible for Ontario Works assistance pending a decision under the ODSP (see Directive #2.4: Referrals to the ODSP for more information).

Employment Information Session (EIS)

As part of the application process, an Administrator may require an applicant, spouse or dependent adult to attend an EIS. Alternatively, attendance at an EIS may be the initial employment assistance activity on the Participation Agreement (see Directive #2.6: Employment Information Session for more information).

Literacy Screening Questionnaire

As part of the application process, an Administrator may also require an applicant and other adult members of the benefit unit with less than a grade 12 level education (or its equivalent) to take the approved Literacy Screening Questionnaire, with the exception of:

- a person with a learning disorder; and
- an applicant who is only applying for Temporary Care Assistance.

Alternatively, the Literacy Screening Questionnaire may be completed as an initial employment assistance activity or as part of the EIS (See Directive #8.3: Literacy Screening, Assessment and Training for more information.)

Notice of Eligibility Decision

A decision regarding eligibility shall be made and communicated in writing, with assistance issued to an eligible applicant, **within four working days** from initial contact where an applicant has provided all of the required information for staff to make an eligibility decision. Initial contact means the point at which the applicant makes first contact, either by telephone or in person, with the Ontario Works office. Written notice of the eligibility decision can be provided to the applicant in person or by regular prepaid mail (see Directive #10.1: Notice and Internal Review Process for more information).

Effective Date of Eligibility

An eligibility decision is effective from the date determined by the Administrator and may be before, on, or after the date of the decision.