

DIRECTIVE #2.8: HOME VISITS

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Section 14 of the Act.

Section 12 of Regulation 134/98.

AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

Acceptable methods are in place for determining when a home visit may be required.

Documentation is on file to support decisions made.

APPLICATION OF POLICY

Home visits may occur at the request of an applicant or an Administrator. Home visits may only take place during the delivery agent's regular business hours. Delivery agents should have policies and procedures in place to ensure the security of workers undertaking home visits. Policies should allow flexibility for staff to end a home visit at any time if they are in an uncomfortable situation (e.g., a violent or intoxicated applicant or participant, an unsafe physical location, a serious health concern in the home, etc.).

Applicant Requests for Home Visits

An applicant may request an intake appointment be scheduled at a location other than an Ontario Works office (including his or her home) due to his or her mobility or transportation issues, care-giving or work responsibilities, training or school requirements, illness, health and safety of the applicant, or other extraordinary needs.

The final decision about the location of the intake appointment remains with the Administrator. The health and safety to the applicant, participant and staff is a priority in determining a suitable location.

Administrator Requests for Home Visits

An Administrator may request a home visit in order to collect or verify information necessary for determining initial or ongoing eligibility for assistance.

Workers are limited to verifying eligibility criteria that is in **plain view** such as assets (e.g., vehicles), residency (i.e., the person actually resides in the home), accommodation arrangements (e.g., self-contained dwelling unit) or discretionary benefits (e.g., the need for home repairs). Staff cannot search areas that are not in plain view (e.g., drawers, cupboards or closets). Applicants and participants have the same right to protection as others against searches of their home or person. Acting beyond the “plain view” verification of eligibility would require a search warrant.

Delivery agents should establish a method for identifying situations where a home visit may be required, and may draw on tools, such as the Consolidated Verification Process (CVP) criteria in making recommendations about home visits.

Administrators may not request a home visit based on a suspicion of dishonesty or fraud. In these situations, a referral is made to designated staff (i.e., an Eligibility Review Officer) who are authorized to enter the home for the purposes of investigating either with the consent of the applicant or participant, or with a search warrant.

Home visits may occur with or without notice to the applicant or participant. Whether a home visit is arranged in advance or not, staff must ask for the applicant or participant's permission to enter the home and **cannot** insist on entry. If entry is refused, staff must document the reason for refusal.

Applicants and participants have a right to privacy and may have valid reasons for refusing a home visit, including, but not limited to the presence of visitors, an illness in the home, mourning, religious observance or a previously scheduled appointment or commitment (e.g., work).

Applicants and participants must be advised that the possible consequence of refusing a home visit without a valid reason may result in denial or cancellation of assistance. Administrators should exercise discretion when considering the validity of a refusal, and may consider any previous refusals in making a determination about consequences.

If there is a valid reason for refusal, the visit may be rescheduled. Applicants and participants must receive written notice of a decision to deny or cancel assistance due to the refusal of a home visit and their right to request an internal review of the decision (see Directive #10.1: Notice and Internal Review Process for more information).