

Ontario Disability Support Program – Employment Supports

1.1 - Introduction to ODSP Employment Supports

Summary of Directive

This directive provides an introduction to ODSP Employment Supports, including the roles of Regional Offices, Employment Supports staff, service providers, and clients.

Intent of Policy

To provide a detailed description of ODSP Employment Supports, including an understanding of the guiding mandate and principles that comprise ODSP Employment Supports.

Application of Policy

ODSP Employment Supports is a program that connects people with disabilities to sustainable, competitive employment by providing the supports clients need to get a job, keep the job and advance their careers where appropriate.

Mandate

ODSP Employment Supports helps people with disabilities to increase their economic independence through competitive, sustainable jobs. The program also helps employers meet their business needs by providing supports to hire and retain employees with disabilities.

Principles

The following program principles have guided the development of ODSP Employment Supports. Employment Supports staff will ensure that all aspects of the program reflect the following general principles:

Labour Market Focused

- Service providers undertake marketing and outreach activities to develop placements and employment opportunities with local employers.
- Clients are made aware of employment opportunities and provided with the employment supports needed to bridge the gap between unemployment and employment.
- Employment will reflect the current reality of the labour market and can include full-time or part-time employment, self-employment, or

- Service providers are remunerated based on their ability to connect people with disabilities with sustainable, competitive employment, retain them in employment and advance their careers where appropriate.

Service Accessibility

- Access to employment supports is simple and timely.
- Service providers will ensure that employment supports are barrier free.
- People with disabilities have a role in program planning, service delivery and evaluating quality of service.

Client responsibility

- Participation in the program is voluntary.
- Clients are responsible for achieving their employment goals.
- Clients actively participate in identifying work that they are capable of doing and that is available in the labour market, as well as the supports they need to find and maintain employment.

Overview

ODSP Employment Supports is based on a “brokerage” model, where funding is provided to third party service providers who are responsible for placing and retaining Employment Supports clients in employment and helping those clients increase their level of earnings through career advancement.

Employment Supports is an employment placement and retention service where funding to service providers is based on achieving employment results. Funding is directly linked to the employment outcomes of Employment Supports clients.

Employment Supports staff are responsible for determining the eligibility of applicants, providing upfront information and orientation sessions to applicants, assisting clients to access the services they need to achieve their employment goals, and monitoring the quality of services.

ODSP Employment Supports provides funding for a range of supports that are intended to remove disability-related barriers to employment and lead to *competitive employment*.

Competitive Employment

Competitive employment is broadly defined as remunerative employment that can reasonably be expected to contribute to a person’s economic well-being. It

can mean conventional employment where there is a typical employee/employer relationship and the employee is earning minimum wage or more. It can include full-time, part-time, contract, or seasonal employment in order to recognize the diverse nature of people's disabilities and how their disabilities may impact their employment.

Competitive employment can also include self-employment or ownership or membership participation in a business enterprise where the objective is to earn at least the equivalent of minimum wage.

For some applicants, competitive employment may not be possible or may not be achievable as an immediate goal. Consequently, information regarding other sources of appropriate support and assistance will be provided to applicants/clients as available in local communities.

Eligible Goods and Services

ODSP Employment Supports provides funding to service providers who work with clients to determine what employment-related supports are required in order to remove barriers to competitive employment and to assist the client in attaining his/her competitive employment goal. The service provider and the client will jointly decide what goods and/or services are required in order to place and retain the client in competitive employment.

Regional Offices

Regional Offices are responsible for ensuring that people with disabilities who are eligible for ODSP Employment Supports have access to goods and services needed to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment.

In order to meet this responsibility, Regional Offices will enter into funding agreements with an extensive network of service providers who will assist clients to access the supports necessary to achieve their competitive employment goal.

Regional Offices will monitor the quality and effectiveness of the supports provided to clients by service providers, as well as key outcomes achieved including the number of job placements and the length of time clients are retained in employment.

Regional Offices will engage in local employer outreach and program marketing in order to increase awareness of ODSP Employment Supports and to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Employment Supports System Managers

Employment Supports System Managers (ESSMs) are responsible for the overall service system management of the program, the coordination of services, and the supervision of Employment Supports staff. Key responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- ensuring that people with disabilities within the service area, regardless of the nature or extent of their disabilities, have access to ODSP Employment Supports;
- negotiating and contracting with service providers and monitoring the quality and effectiveness of services provided to eligible clients;
- marketing and promotion;
- local employer outreach and program marketing;
- collaborating/linking with other related service systems such as Ontario Works and Job Connect;
- evaluating client satisfaction and making improvements to the delivery of services based on the findings of these evaluations;
- involving people with disabilities in the planning of delivery of the program through a Local Planning and Coordination Group (LPCG);
- managing the dispute resolution process, minimizing complaints and disputes, and ensuring that an effective local dispute resolution process is available and accessible to clients; and
- ensuring accountability.

Employment Supports Staff

In order to ensure that ODSP Employment Supports provides an effective system of supports to people with disabilities to assist them to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment, the key responsibilities of Employment Supports staff include, but are not limited to:

- acting as a resource in the areas of training and employment for Employment Supports clients, ODSP Income Support recipients, the Income Support staff in the local office staff, and the community;
- maintaining a network of contacts among the business community, consumer groups, local agencies, educational programs, Job Connect, and Ontario Works to maintain a working knowledge of the availability of training and employment supports and job opportunities;
- ensuring training and employment information within the local office is kept current, and is accessible and user friendly;
- complying with all legislation, regulations and program directives;
- determining applicant eligibility for ODSP Employment Supports;
- assisting clients (if required) in selecting service providers;
- coordinating services for applicants and eligible clients with a high degree of professionalism, quality and reliability;
- recognizing all clients as individuals with unique circumstances who encounter unique barriers in preparing for, obtaining and maintaining

- promoting self-direction and prompt service for clients who require a minimum amount of assistance;
- ensuring Employment Supports Funding Agreements are in place, and that clients are aware of their obligations under the agreement;
- maintaining a record of all agreements and contracts;
- identifying gaps in service and providing recommendations to the ESSM;
- assisting applicants and clients to understand their rights and responsibilities in accessing and maintaining employment, including legislation such as the *ODSP Act*, *Ontario Human Rights Code*, *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*, and *Employment Standards Act*, and communicating those rights and responsibilities to applicants and clients as required;
- assisting clients to deal with service provider issues or employer issues, as needed by the client;
- directing all applicants who are not eligible and clients who are not able to prepare for competitive employment to other supports and services they may require, as appropriate;
- monitoring progress with clients and/or service providers;
- liaising with service providers on a regular basis; and
- supporting service providers having difficulty meeting targets, including examining their placement model and providing appropriate support.

Applicants/Clients

Applicants are responsible for providing all documentation required to demonstrate initial and on-going eligibility.

Applicants must intend to and be able to prepare for, obtain and maintain competitive employment. If the client is eligible for similar services from other government or private sector sources, service providers will assist the client to access those services first.

Clients are responsible for playing an active role in setting their competitive employment goal.

Clients are accountable for completing the steps necessary to achieve their competitive employment goal as set out in their employment plan.

Clients who have the financial means to contribute to the supports they receive may be responsible for a portion of the costs of those supports.

Service Providers

Service providers are responsible for ensuring that quality goods and services are provided to Employment Supports clients. Service providers are also responsible for meeting the job placement and retention targets as outlined in the funding agreement negotiated with the Regional Offices.

Service providers are required to develop individual employment plans with clients and to make those plans available to the local Employment Supports office, as requested. These plans will identify the competitive employment goal of the client, as well as the barriers to employment and the key supports and services that will be provided to place and retain the client in employment.

Service providers will work collaboratively and form partnerships with other service providers or employment programs in the community in order to maximize access to the full range of employment services required by clients to get and keep a job.

As a part of their reporting requirements, service providers will ensure all forms required by the Ministry are properly completed, maintain proper client files/records for accountability purposes, and provide Regional Offices with reports and information, including closure reports with re-application conditions, as required/requested.

Service providers will participate in the Dispute Resolution Process, as required.

Federal / Provincial LMAPD Agreement

ODSP Employment Supports is cost-shared (50/50) with the federal government under the Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities (LMAPD). This agreement provides cost-shared funding for provincial programs that assist people with disabilities prepare for, obtain and maintain employment.