

Ontario Works Policy Directives

2.6 Employment Information Session

Legislative Authority

Sections 17(3), 20(3) and 26 of Regulation 134/98.

Audit Requirements

Documentation is on file to indicate that all participants have attended an Employment Information Session (EIS) where required.

Application of Policy

The EIS provides an in-depth introduction to Ontario Works employment assistance activities and supports. The EIS is intended to help participants formulate Participation Agreements (PA) aimed at enhancing employability, finding and maintaining employment and increasing earnings with the goal of achieving financial independence.

Who Attends

All applicants, spouses and dependent adults included in the benefit unit are required to attend an EIS, however Administrators may waive this requirement for re-applicants who attended an EIS in the previous six months. Participants that have been temporarily deferred from participation requirements at application should attend an EIS to encourage voluntary participation in employment assistance activities.

Timing and Format

Administrators have flexibility in scheduling the EIS as:

- part of the application process; or
- the initial activity on the PA.

The EIS should occur within 30 days of the PA being signed where the session is the participant's initial employment assistance activity.

Sessions should be delivered to groups of participants where practicable. Group settings can help participants to feel less isolated, stimulate dialogue, provide opportunities to form connections and help to ensure participants receive consistent information. However, delivery agents should have local protocols in

place to support individual sessions where a group setting is inappropriate or impracticable (e.g. where interpreter services are needed).

Content

Delivery agents have flexibility in determining the content of the EIS. Generally, the EIS should include the following elements:

- Information on the full range of Ontario Works employment assistance activities, available resource centres and the Ontario Works participation and employment supports that may be accessed (e.g., child care, employment-related expenses, earnings exemptions, Full-time Employment Benefit, Other Employment and Employment Assistance Activities Benefit and Extended Employment Health Benefits).
- A clear description of the participant's obligation to participate in employment assistance activities as a condition of eligibility for income assistance, and the consequences of failing to comply with participation requirements without reasonable explanation.
- Help in the identification of skills and qualifications relevant to various types of employment within the local labour market.
- Development and/or updating of the PA to include the participant's planned activities that will help him or her move towards employment, including any temporary deferrals or restrictions on participation requirements.

In addition, delivery agents may:

- tailor sessions for specific participant groups such as sole-support parents or participants facing specific types of employment barriers (e.g., homelessness or unstable housing);
- incorporate the Literacy Screening Questionnaire into the EIS; and/or
- use videos to provide basic information.