

Ontario Works Policy Directives

8.4 Addiction Services Initiative (ASI)

Legislative Authority

Sections 2, 7, 26(8)(8.1), 26.1(2), 29, 33(1)(4.1) and 47.1 of Regulation 134/98.

Audit Requirements

Documentation is on file to support decisions made. This includes a copy of the Intensive Case Management Plan.

Participant follow-ups are documented and have taken place. Instances of non-compliance are documented and on file.

Application of Policy

The ASI is a targeted employment assistance activity designed to help participants whose substance abuse is a barrier to participation in Ontario Works and employment.

The three components of the ASI are:

- a screening test for substance abuse;
- participation in an assessment of substance abuse;
- participation in a program for the treatment of substance abuse.

Where a delivery agent has been approved to deliver the ASI, Administrators may require participants to engage in screening, assessment and/or treatment for substance abuse that is a barrier to participation or employment.

There is no expectation that participants should be ready to work immediately upon completion of treatment; however, there is an expectation that participants be encouraged and supported to take the necessary steps toward finding and maintaining sustainable employment which may include participation in other employment assistance activities. Individualized case management plans should be updated and amended to clearly outline participation in employment assistance activities.

Required Components

Screening Test for Substance Abuse

Participants may be referred for a screening test for substance abuse when there

are reasonable grounds to believe that their repeated substance abuse may be or may become a barrier to participation in employment.

All service managers are required to use the approved screening test. The results of the screening test are not equivalent to a diagnosis or confirmation that a substance abuse problem exists; however, the results of the test can be used in making a determination about next steps for the participant.

The screening process involves the use of the CAGE-AID tool, or another screening tool approved by the Director, but it also involves motivational interviewing techniques to establish a positive trusting relationship with the applicant or participant to ascertain barriers and next steps for treatment.

Assessment of Substance Abuse

If screening indicates that a participant has a substance abuse problem that is a barrier to employment, the participant is referred for assessment to a Ministry of Health and Long-term Care (MOHLTC) funded addiction program. This program administers the MOHLTC-mandated standardized assessment tools required for a participant's entry into all MOHLTC-funded addiction programs

A participant should not be rushed to assessment; some participants require "pre-assessment readiness" and stabilization work (i.e., intensive case management) prior to taking the assessment. Steps taken toward assessment readiness should be documented in the ICMP and the Participation Agreement.

The assessment process provides insight into what treatment will be appropriate and effective for each individual. The Ontario Works ASI case manager and the participant may be consulted in the treatment planning process in order to determine what additional supports might be helpful.

The majority of First Nation communities do not have access to agencies using the MOHLTC standardized assessment tools. Where this is the case, First Nation ASI programs will use an assessment tool approved by the Director.

Program for Treatment of Substance Abuse

The treatment program to which a participant is referred will be the least restrictive and least intrusive as is appropriate, in accordance with the Admission and Discharge Criteria of the MOHLTC. Treatments can range from individual counselling to self-help groups to residential services, and may also include programs for friends and family members. The treatment plan should include a plan for continued care, for a period of up to one year after completion of treatment.

Participants will work with Ontario Works staff and substance abuse treatment

staff to update and/or modify treatment plans as necessary.

The ASI case manager should be notified about any attendance issues (i.e., absences or perpetual lateness) by the assessment agency or the treatment agency.

Participants are responsible for committing to their participation requirements. This includes agreeing to give notification to appropriate Ontario Works staff and/or service providers about possible absences that include a valid reason for being absent from assessment or treatment appointments.

Additional Program Elements

The ASI Service Path

There are two primary ways that a participant would start on the service path for ASI:

- **Self-disclosure:** participants who come forward on their own to say that they have a substance abuse problem which is a barrier to participation and employment.
- **Identification by staff:** participants whose participation record/history may indicate that substance abuse is impairing their ability to participate in Ontario Works or to obtain and keep employment.

Intensive Case Management

Intensive case management ensures that ASI participants will receive the right services, in proper sequence and in a timely manner. Other goals of intensive case management include providing crisis intervention, as needed, helping to stabilize a participant in a crisis through direct interventions and mobilizing necessary supports and services.

Specialized staff responsible for participants in the ASI should have lower than average caseloads to enable them to provide intensive case management.

There are six primary functions that characterize intensive case management:

- Identification and outreach to clients.
- Screening, to determine a participant's strengths, needs and areas for further development.
- Planning, including the development of a service plan and an ICMP for substance abuse treatment.
- Linking participants to necessary services and informal support systems.
- Ongoing monitoring of participant progress and needs.

- Client advocacy, client supports and interceding where necessary to ensure access and fairness.

Other functions of intensive case management could include:

- Crisis intervention: providing direct interventions and mobilizing needed supports and services.
- Systems advocacy: intervening with organizations or larger systems of care in order to promote more effective, equitable and accountable services for Ontario Works participants.
- Resource development: working with community partners and participants to create services to address the needs of the participants.

Record Keeping

Staff will use the Participation Agreement to accurately document the steps in the participant's treatment plan. These may include any or all of the following: name of treatment agency and all other agencies involved (e.g., CAS, Probation and Parole, AA, NA, etc.), length of treatment, whether participant is attending appointments, what supports the participant has accessed, and any other relevant information.

Dealing with Non-Compliance

The ASI recognizes that as part of the treatment process, relapse(s) may occur, and participants may therefore require more than one attempt to achieve their treatment goals.

As a result, one of the key responsibilities of the ASI case manager is to help identify and resolve or facilitate the resolution of issues and problems that may arise through participating in ASI. Emphasis should be placed on taking measures to prevent ineligibility due to non-compliance.

Progressive Measures

Measures to prevent ineligibility due to non-compliance are as follows:

- After the first unexplained absence from treatment, staff will follow-up with the participant on a daily basis to ensure attendance for treatment.
- After the second unexplained absence, staff will contact the participant and workers involved with the participant to review and modify the treatment and ICMP if necessary.
- After the third unexplained absence, staff will investigate to determine whether or not the financial assistance is being used for the purpose intended. If not, a trustee may be appointed and the participant will receive a weekly allowance from the trustee. Trusteeship will continue until the

participant is able to manage her/his affairs. Rent may be paid by the trustee or directly to the landlord by Ontario Works ([see Directive 3.6: Trusteeship](#) for more information).

- Any subsequent unexplained absence from a treatment program will result in a formal case conference to review the treatment and next steps, including the determination of ineligibility or reduced assistance due to non-compliance.

Early Reinstatement

Any participant who is made ineligible for non-compliance with his/her participation requirements in the ASI will be eligible for early reinstatement.

ASI case managers should ensure that participants, who are made ineligible for non-compliance related to participation in the ASI, will be eligible for reinstatement upon re-applying and signing a Participation Agreement. Participants must agree to participate in the elements of the program (screening, assessment or treatment) for which they were previously made non-compliant.