

# ELIGIBILITY

## OVERVIEW

Eligibility is the first and most basic decision to be made. All other decisions (e.g. support levels and funding levels) occur later in the process of considering the request for Special Services at Home (SSAH) funding and presume that basic eligibility has already been determined.

This subject includes the following:

- Principles
- Eligibility
- Process
- Other Considerations
- Standards
- File Review Indicators

***REMINDER: Refer to Glossary for all definitions***

## SPECIAL SERVICES AT HOME PROGRAM GUIDELINES

---

### **PRINCIPLES**

All decision-making should reflect the content and intent of the Ministry of Community and Social Services and Special Services At Home service principles and these Guidelines, which inform and guide all aspects of program delivery.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

A determination of eligibility, which is the first and most basic decision, is made using the following guideline:

Children with a developmental or physical disability and adults with a developmental disability are eligible for Special Services at Home if they:

- Are residents of Ontario.
- Have ONGOING FUNCTIONAL LIMITATIONS as a result of a disability.
- Require support beyond that which is typically provided by families.
- Are living at home with their families or are living outside the family home **but** receive no residential staff support from a government-funded source (e.g. transfer payment agency) or an OUTSIDE PAID RESOURCE.

All four criteria must be met. It is essential that the developmental and/or physical disability be documented by a physician or psychologist.

In the majority of situations, basic eligibility is established only once – at the time of the first application – with the following exceptions:

1. Where the functional limitations may change over time due to the type of disability, the person's age, situation, needs and skills.
2. Where an infant has been funded before a definitive diagnosis is established.
3. Where a child who has been funded due to a physical disability is approaching his/her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## SPECIAL SERVICES AT HOME PROGRAM GUIDELINES

---

### **PROCESS**

This process establishes that all eligibility criteria have been met.

The person requiring support is a child who has a developmental or physical disability or an adult who has a developmental disability.

### **RESIDENTS OF ONTARIO**

It is the person with the disability who must be a resident of Ontario.

Residents are those who, at the time of application, have established their principal residence in Ontario by:

- Citizenship
- Permanent Resident status
- Minister's Permit
- Permission to stay granted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (e.g. refugee status)

A copy of supporting documentation may be required by the regionally based offices, at their discretion, when they consider that confirmation is required.

Visitors are not eligible. They are considered to be residents of their home province or country.

### **ONGOING FUNCTIONAL LIMITATIONS AS A RESULT OF A DISABILITY**

#### **Presence of a Disability**

The individual's disabling condition must be established through written documentation from a physician or psychologist.

With INFANTS, determining a definitive diagnosis of disability can be difficult. Therefore, a written statement describing the probability or presence of delay and risk of further delay is required from a physician or psychologist.

While basic program eligibility is normally decided once, in the case of an infant without a diagnosis, the determination of eligibility must be undertaken again at approximately 30 months of age.

Requests for continuation of service after 30 months of age will be considered based on need, diagnosis and supporting documentation from a physician or psychologist.

### Ongoing Functional Limitations

Ongoing functional limitations resulting from a disability are established through:

- Statements made by the applicant as to needs, goals and requests, and
- Written documentation from professionals.

### SUPPORT BEYOND THAT WHICH IS TYPICALLY PROVIDED BY FAMILIES

Expenses typically met by families or individuals include such items as food, clothing, diapers, child care, recreation, camp, education, employment costs, dental care, ROUTINE MEDICAL COSTS and medical fees in excess of the Provincial fee schedule. **For a full discussion of decision-making about supports, see the Supports section.**

### LIVING AT HOME WITH FAMILIES

The definition of family as it appears in the glossary of these guidelines must be used.

Sometimes, due to the nature of a disability, the person may need to be away from home for a period of time, but still be in Ontario. Three special circumstances are considered within this criterion:

#### 1. Residential Schools

A student attending a residential school as a result of a disability may be eligible for SSAH funding during the time he/she resides with the family (for example, weekends and school holidays). This means that the family is responsible for the care and upbringing of the student and remains responsible for basic care items such as clothing, basic medical care, etc.

#### 2. Residents of Hospitals

A person residing in a general or convalescent hospital as a result of a disability may be eligible for SSAH funding if:

- The stay in the institution is intended to be short-term with an expected discharge within 6 months, and
- A treatment/discharge plan is in place, and
- The plan includes regular, consistent weekends and holidays at home.

## SPECIAL SERVICES AT HOME PROGRAM GUIDELINES

---

In these situations, SSAH funding may be approved for use during the time spent in the hospital or at home. For time spent in hospital, funding may be approved to provide continuity of care and activities related to personal development and growth and services not typically provided by hospital staff. The other conditions regarding short-term stay and discharge must be met in order to approve SSAH funding for use in hospitals.

### 3. Living at home on a part-time basis

A person who lives in or spends extended periods of time in a GROUP HOME, in foster care, in a home share/shared care host family setting or an institution may be eligible for SSAH funding. They would be eligible only for the time he/she resides at the home of a family member, either for visits or as part of a shared care arrangement.

Staff should consider time away from the family home as an additional form of support which may help the family in terms of relieving stress and enhancing their ability to cope. This should be considered as a factor in decision-making and prioritization.

### NOT LIVING AT HOME WITH FAMILIES

Although they may not be living at home, children with a physical disability and/or a developmental disability or adults with a developmental disability can be considered for SSAH funding when:

- They currently live in accommodation outside the family home with no residential staff support from a government-funded source (e.g. transfer payment agency) or OPR or,
- They move from their families' homes and receive no residential staff support from a government-funded source or OPR and,
- The request for SSAH funding does not duplicate the services already in the place or available from other community resources.

Children with a physical disability and/or a developmental disability or adults with a developmental disability can also be considered for SSAH funding when:

- They need to live away from the families' homes temporarily because of family illness or other emergency. (In these situations, SSAH funding may continue to be provided to offer as much stability and continuity in the care of the person as possible), and/or

## SPECIAL SERVICES AT HOME PROGRAM GUIDELINES

---

- They are making the transition from their families' homes to a group home, Family Home program or other supported accommodation. These individuals may be eligible to receive SSAH funding on a time-limited basis (to a maximum of six (6) months to help facilitate the move to their new home situation.

Regionally-based offices must consider the role of transfer payment agencies in supporting the transition of individuals and whether the approval of SSAH funding would duplicate or replace a service which could be provided by the transfer payment system.

Individuals *are not* eligible for SSAH funding if their primary residence is in an accommodation where residential support is provided by a government-funded source or OPR. This includes (but is not limited to) individuals living in accommodations that are typically referred to as:

- Group homes
- Independent Community Living (also known as SUPPORTED INDEPENDENT LIVING)
- FAMILYHOME Programs
- Foster Home programs
- Rental accommodation with staff supports
- Retirement homes
- Nursing homes
- INDIVIDUALIZED RESIDENTIAL MODEL accommodation
- Any other living arrangement where residential staff support is provided by a government-funded source (e.g. transfer payment agency) or OPR.

People *are not* eligible to receive SSAH funding where supports for the activities usually funded through SSAH are already provided by (or available from) a transfer payment system.

**Note: The three exceptions for people not living at home that are currently specified earlier in the Eligibility section remain in effect and are not affected by these exclusions.**

### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

To assist staff in the application and interpretation of eligibility criteria, this section includes guidance for decision-making in the following situations:

#### **INFANTS**

##### **Early Intervention**

Infancy is one of the most crucial periods in the development of a child. Early intervention services and supports are designed to assist with developmental needs at an early stage. Problems may be less likely to become more serious or chronic later. Early intervention supports can minimize or even eliminate the negative consequences associated with an infant's needs.

##### **Challenges for Families**

The care of an infant can be challenging and stressful. These factors may multiply when an infant has a special need. In addition to the demands of professional supports, appointments and special training, families may be under great personal stress. They might need to find out what supports exist in their community. They may be separated from their hospitalized infant. They have to identify their own needs for emotional and physical supports. Possibly, they are starting to assess and process their new situation but may not yet have a definitive diagnosis. They may be coming to terms with a serious problem affecting the future of their child and family.

##### **Challenges for SSAH Staff**

As technological advances are helping to increase life spans, an increasing number of infants require a high degree of home supports. This, coupled with the value of early intervention, has a significant impact on new demand for SSAH supports.

While this does not mean infants automatically have a higher priority, it does mean that staff must consider these factors. This makes the review, analysis and decision-making processes more complex. Along with the usual decision-making principles, the following three factors should be considered:

- The family's special challenges.
- The value of early intervention.
- The possible lack of definitive diagnosis.

With infants, a definitive diagnosis of developmental or physical disability may be difficult to determine. Where this is the case, the presence of a delay or significant probability of delay is considered.

### **AUTISM**

People with AUTISM differ in the number of characteristics displayed and the severity of symptoms. Although the disorder is severe and lifelong, symptoms change over time and many skills can develop with appropriate intervention.

**Note:** Documentation that refers to only “tendencies” cannot be accepted as equivalent to a diagnosis of the disorder. For example, a statement that the individual has autistic-like features is, on its own, insufficient documentation of disability.

### **SENSORY IMPAIRMENTS**

Within the definition of physical disability, there is a reference to people with other sensory impairments. This refers to either significant visual impairment or hearing loss. A person with a sensory impairment may be considered eligible for SSAH funding as a person with a physical disability on the basis of a physician’s assessment.

An adult or child who has multi-sensory deprivation due to a combined incidence of DEAFNESS AND BLINDNESS is considered eligible for SSAH funding. An assessment to establish mental impairment is not required in such cases.

### **BRAIN INJURIES**

An application from a person who has acquired a brain injury during his/her FORMATIVE YEARS (whether sudden – for example, as a result of a stroke – or as a result of a tumor or other causes) may be considered for SSAH funding either within the context of developmental and/or physical disability. The variable nature of the injuries and the circumstances in each situation make it inappropriate to classify all such injuries exclusively under one category.

It is important to take the following factors into account when considering whether the disability is developmental or physical in nature:

- The nature of the ongoing functional limitations arising from the injury.

## SPECIAL SERVICES AT HOME PROGRAM GUIDELINES

---

- The individual's perception of himself or herself as having a developmental or physical disability or multiple disabilities.
- The family perception of the individual as having a developmental or physical disability or multiple disabilities.
- The physician's assessment.

### TRANSITION PLANNING FOR CHILDREN WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

Adults with physical disabilities are not eligible for SSAH funding. It is important to plan for the transition to adulthood with children who have physical disabilities and their families well before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. When SSAH funding is approved for a child with a physical disability who is 17 years old, staff will:

- Inform the individual and their family that SSAH does not fund adults with a physical disability.
- Suggest appropriate community linkages and resources.
- Establish an end-date with the individual and/or family for the SSAH contract.
- Not approve funding for applicants with physical disabilities who have already reached 18 years of age.

People with multiple disabilities may continue to be considered for SSAH funding if they are eligible as an adult with a developmental disability.

#### **Note:**

Regionally-based offices have the discretion, based on need, to establish an end-date two months after the end of the month in which the 18th birthday falls (for example, if the individual's Birthday falls on June 3rd, the end-date can be extended to August 31st where it is deemed to be necessary to do so).

## SPECIAL SERVICES AT HOME PROGRAM GUIDELINES

---

### **STANDARDS**

#### **Special Services at Home is committed to:**

- Decision-making that adheres to the service principles outlined in these guidelines.
- An eligibility review process based on individual applications.
- Establishing basic eligibility once (exceptions noted in these Guidelines).
- Recognizing the value of early intervention and supports.
- Recognizing the additional challenges faced by families caring for a child with a physical and/or developmental disability or an adult with a developmental disability.
- Considering infants to be eligible before a definitive diagnosis is made.

## SPECIAL SERVICES AT HOME PROGRAM GUIDELINES

---

### **FILE REVIEW INDICATORS**

Analysis of eligibility decisions made over time should demonstrate that the SSAH service principles have been utilized, the Guidelines adhered to, and standards met.

Specific indicators include:

1. Evidence that eligibility was determined at the time of the initial application and that there are no subsequent requests for new documentation to demonstrate basic program eligibility.
2. Where this is not the case, there should be a notation on file indicating the rationale for seeking new documentation (e.g. when an infant without a diagnosis is turning 30 months of age or when a child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday is approaching).
3. On applications made on behalf of infants, there is evidence that the importance of prompt action was considered due to the value of early intervention or extra stressors for the family.
4. Evidence that definitive diagnosis was not required in the case of infants and that documentation of eligibility includes written statements describing the probability of delay and subsequent risk of further delay.
5. There was no requirement to establish cognitive impairment for people with a combined incidence of deafness and blindness.