

# APPLICATIONS

## OVERVIEW

The application process is the consistent method through which people with disabilities and/or their families have the opportunity to state their needs, current situation, goals and service requests. At the same time, it provides staff with a regular opportunity to equitably review all requests.

This section addresses the application process step by step. It lays out the review process and communications expectations.

The subject is divided as follows:

- Principles
- The Application Process
- The Review Process
- Standards
- File Review Indicators

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

## **SPECIAL SERVICES AT HOME PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

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### **PRINCIPLES**

The application process brings together every subject section of these Guidelines. The process should reflect the content and intent of the Ministry of Community and Social Services and SSAH service principles, as well as these Guidelines, which inform and guide all aspects of the application process.

## **THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

### **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

It is important to communicate proactively with families and the community before and during the application process. People and organizations need to know what the full process is and how and where to begin. Where applicable, locally identified priorities should be provided in writing. . Each part of the process should reflect the intent and content of these Guidelines.

### **STEP 1 - THE APPLICATION FORM**

The application form provides individuals and families with an opportunity to outline their current situation, state their strengths, needs, current services, goals, and requests. The completed application becomes the individual's detailed service plan for SSAH funding. At the same time, it provides staff with the information necessary to review requests equitably.

The application form is divided into nine areas:

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Section One</b>   | Family Caregiver  |
| <b>Section Two</b>   | Applying for Special Services at Home   |
| <b>Section Three</b> | Individual and Family Update  |
| <b>Section Four</b>  | Requests for Service  |
| <b>Section Five</b>  | Description of the Strengths and Interests of Your Family Member and the Support that You Provide |
| <b>Section Six</b>   | Your Family Situation   |
| <b>Section Seven</b> | Support Networks that are Available to You  |
| <b>Section Eight</b> | Paid Services and Supports  |
| <b>Section Nine</b>  | Signatures  |

### **DOCUMENTATION**

Documentation of the applicant's disability is required from a physician or a psychologist to establish basic eligibility; in the instance of hearing or visual impairment, documentation may be provided by an audiologist or ophthalmologist. In the majority of situations, basic eligibility is required only at the time of the first application. **Please see the Eligibility section of the guidelines for more information.**

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Documentation may also be required to demonstrate that the applicant is legally entitled to live in Canada and is a resident of Ontario. See the **Eligibility section for further information**.

Where the person is re-applying for Personal Development and Growth, a progress report is required documentation.

**Note:**

While families may get help from a community agency or any other person to fill out the form, it is the family or person with a disability who develops and controls the detailed service plan. Agencies and applicants should be aware that signing a blank application form (or any other document pertaining to SSAH) is not acceptable. In such a case, the documents will be disallowed and new documents required.

### **STREAMLINED AND FULL APPLICATION FORMS**

SSAH funds are approved for a maximum of one year at a time. An application form must be submitted each year.

All new applicants must complete a full application form. Applicants must complete all sections of the form when completing a full application,

Once an individual has been approved for funding, they may use a streamlined application to apply for the program in the following two years. Applicants completing a streamlined application need only fill out sections one, two, three and nine of the application form if there has been no SIGNIFICANT CHANGE in circumstances since the initial application was submitted.

Individuals/families must complete a full application **only** once every three years, unless:

- A request is being made for a different amount of funding, and/or
- They have experienced a significant change in the individual's care needs, since the date of the last full application, and/or
- The family situation or support network has changed significantly since the date of the last full SSAH application.
- A renewal is being processed (if the services are being renewed in-year, that is, outside of the regular annual application cycle)
- A request is being made for a different type of service (i.e. Personal Development and Growth or Family Relief and Support)
- An individual has moved to an area served by a different regionally-based office.

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In each of the above circumstances a new, full application form must be submitted.

There is no retroactive funding for new services or for increased service levels.

**Note:**

1. People with an existing contract must be reminded in writing to reapply at least 2 months before the expiry of the current authorization.
2. Those reapplying for Personal Development and Growth must submit a progress report.
3. When a family moves from one area of the province to another, continuity of SSAH funding is important. For details on the transfer of service commitment, **see the Funds section.**

### **STEP 2 - ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

A letter of acknowledgement is sent to the applicant when a completed application form is received. The letter should indicate that the application has been received and that a decision will be made and communicated within a stated time-frame.

### **STEP 3 - ELIGIBILITY REVIEW**

This step of the process needs to reflect the content and intent of all sections of **Decision-making and Eligibility sections.**

### **STEP 4 - REVIEW FOR SUPPORTS**

This step of the process should reflect the content and intent of all sections of the **Decision-making and Supports sections.**

### **STEP 5 - INFORMING APPLICANTS**

Each person with a disability and their family must be advised of how decisions are made in SSAH as well as what decision was made. The decision should outline the key elements of the approval including the type of service authorized (i.e. Personal Development and Growth or Family Relief and Support), the duration of the approval, the amount approved and who will be responsible for receiving and managing the funds.

Where a request has been approved as submitted, written information about next steps should be included.

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When a request has not been approved as submitted, the applicant must be informed of his or her right to ask for a review of the decision. This letter must be clear and direct and include:

1. Written notice of the decision.
2. Reasons for the decision.
3. Information regarding the right to a review.
4. Description of the review process.

### **THE REVIEW PROCESS**

When a request for SSAH has not been approved as presented and applicants feel they have not been treated fairly in the decision-making process in accordance with these Guidelines, they may request a review by a higher level of authority. There are two levels in the review process, each focusing on whether the decision made at the previous level was fair and equitable. The purpose of the review is to assess whether all factors listed in the **Decision-Making section**, have been followed. Please see the **Decision-making section** for a discussion of equity.

#### **FIRST LEVEL**

The family and/or the individual may initiate a review by writing to the Regional Director within 20 working days of receiving the decision letter. The family and/or the individual can request this review on their own or with the help of an advocate. If an advocate is involved, the family and/or individual must co-sign the letter requesting the review.

The family and/or the individual will:

- Be provided with a copy of these Guidelines and asked to provide evidence that the Guidelines have not been applied to their own situation.
- Be invited to provide additional supporting information.
- Have the opportunity for a meeting with the Regional Director or his/her designate.

Upon receipt of a request for review, the Regional Director will designate a person not involved in the original decision to review the situation and make a recommendation. The Regional Director may delegate his/her authority to act and make decisions on behalf of the regionally-based office to an appropriate person.

The Regional Director or designate will respond to the request, in writing, within 20 working days of the receipt of the request for review and/or additional documentation. In the response, regionally-based offices must:

- Outline the reasons for the decision including evidence that their decision reflected the intent of the SSAH program as outlined in these Guidelines.
- Demonstrate that the individual's application was treated fairly and equitably and that the individual/family, new or otherwise, was given fair consideration for the available funds.
- Provide a description of the next step in the review process.

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### SECOND LEVEL

If, after receiving the decision from the regionally-based office, the family continues to feel they were not treated fairly according to these Guidelines, they can request a review at a second level. Within 20 working days of receiving the decision on their review from the regionally-based office, the family and/or person with a disability can write to the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM), Program Management Division to start this review.

The ADM will have access to all of the information and documentation prepared for the first level of review. The ADM's office will designate a person not involved with the original decision to:

- Review the steps taken at the regional level to determine whether the review process at the first level was followed.
- Collect information from the individual and family to determine their understanding about the process and any concerns they have regarding the fairness of the decision made at the first level.
- Review the information provided by the regionally-based office.
- Review information available from other sources (e.g. local service providers involved with the family).
- Provide recommendations to the ADM. In their review, the ADM will focus on whether the decision was made fairly at the first level of the review and, in particular, assess whether:
  - Decision-making reflected the content and intent of these Guidelines which inform and guide SSAH program delivery.
  - An individualized approach was taken, based on the uniqueness of the situation of each applicant.
  - An equitable response was given. Equity is defined in the **Decision-Making section**.

Please note that a decision at this stage of the process does not involve a meeting with the ADM.

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If, after conducting the review, the ADM sets aside a decision of a regionally-based Office, the ADM will focus on the fairness of the decision made and will not prescribe a level of support.. Regions must determine what is fair and equitable for both individual situations and in looking at the broader context of managing SSAH applications within the available resources.

The ADM will respond to the review, in writing, within 20 days of receiving the request for a review and/or additional information.

### **Restrictions Relating to the Review Process**

The review process is not intended to:

- Change or alter the current guidelines.
- Be a mechanism that will lead to an increase in the resources available to this program.

Families and individuals can exercise their right to a review at both levels once per application. The decision made by the ADM is final.

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### **STANDARDS**

Special Services at Home is committed to the goal of:

- Providing applicants with a consistent application process.
- Communicating with applicants in a timely manner.
- Providing applicants with information on the full application process, on locally-identified priorities, where applicable, and the right to ask for a review of the decision.
- An application process which demonstrates flexible and equitable approaches within the parameters of these Guidelines.

### **FILE REVIEW INDICATORS**

An analysis of documentation on file, over a given period of time, should demonstrate that all standards have been followed.

Specific indicators include:

1. A process that was followed as set out in these Guidelines.
2. A demonstrated and visible pattern of sending out reminder letters, letters of acknowledgement and decision letters.
3. Evidence of communicating clear and direct information about the process, time lines and local priorities, where applicable, to individuals, families and community organizations.
4. Evidence of flexible, equitable and individualized decisions based on these Guidelines.
5. A demonstrated pattern of providing clear and direct information about the SSAH Review Process.