

## DECISION-MAKING

### OVERVIEW

Regionally-based offices are responsible for the delivery of Special Services at Home to individuals and families. Regionally-based offices are required to review applications and supporting information and respond to the unique situation of each person with a disability and his or her family within the context of the larger system.

While the first and most basic decision is eligibility, equally important decisions must be made concerning types of services (i.e. personal development and growth, family relief and support), service levels, funding levels and other considerations. The Decision Support Guide, which is a tool to assist staff in reviewing individual applications, is used to support regional decision-making processes.

For these reasons, principles, standards and indicators are specified to inform and guide program delivery across the province.

This subject is divided as follows:

- Principles
- Standards
- File Review Indicators

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

### **PRINCIPLES**

Decision-making should reflect the content and intent of the Ministry service principles (listed in the Introduction Section) and these Guidelines, which inform and guide all aspects of program delivery.

Incorporating these principles into decisions can be challenging. Ministry staff must carefully review each request and exercise a considerable degree of judgement within the parameters of these Guidelines.

Offices will approve funds based on the following SSAH service principles:

- Service needs as expressed by the individual and/or the family.
- Family needs in order to deal with stress and enhance their ability to cope.
- Complexity of the supports required due to the level of ongoing functional limitation.
- Appropriate supports and services currently available in the community.
- Support networks of the individual and family.
- Locally identified priorities, where applicable.
- Availability of funds.

Further, all decision-making should reflect:

- An individualized approach based on a recognition of the uniqueness of the situation of each applicant, and
- An equitable response. Equity is defined later in this section.

### **Individualized Approach**

- It is important to appreciate that each service situation is highly complex and unique.
- Individual needs, family ability to cope, environment and support networks create a particular mix of factors which produce a unique request for consideration.
- SSAH is designed to recognize this through both the application process and these Guidelines:
  - The application process is designed to enable families or people with disabilities to describe their strengths, interests and needs, establish their own goals and define the areas of their personal plans where additional support is requested through SSAH.
  - The decision-making factors encompass the needs of each person with a disability, the needs of each family, the availability of informal supports, the community service system, and the differing priorities and funding resources for SSAH across Ontario.

#### **Note:**

Decision-making must take into account the special circumstances of infants and their families, other impairments and difficult service situations. These areas are detailed in the Eligibility and the Supports sections of these guidelines.

### **Equitable Decision-Making**

The number of people requesting SSAH funding in many parts of the province continues to increase. This service pressure creates a significant challenge to Ministry staff who must work within the resources available for the program. SSAH is not an entitlement program and operates within a fixed allocation.

At the same time, individuals and families applying for funding want to be assured that decisions made about their situation are fair and reasonable. While all needs may not be answered, all applicants will be treated equitably and will receive fair consideration for the available funds. Applicants who are reapplying for service will not be viewed as having a higher priority for service solely because of their reapplication status.

SSAH funding is time-limited and funding levels may vary from one year to the next.

## SPECIAL SERVICES AT HOME PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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Equitable decision-making can create special challenges for those involved in administering SSAH funding. For the purposes of this program, equitable decision-making means:

### **Equity**

Equity is the end result of a fair process that:

- Provides a common application process that gives all applicants an opportunity to submit the information they believe needs to be considered in their request for SSAH support;
- Considers each individual's and family's unique situation and circumstances and shows a willingness to be flexible where circumstances warrant;
- Shows a consistent interpretation and application of the SSAH Guidelines; and
- Results in decisions which are consistent, objective, individualized, and are sensitive to individuals, families, language and culture.

Equity takes all factors into account so that the applicant's treatment is reasonable and similar to other decisions which involve similar facts or circumstances. The results of these decisions may vary depending on the unique circumstances of individuals and their families and on the resources available to regionally-based offices.

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In implementing an equitable approach, regionally-based offices should make attempts to ensure that:

- Individuals and families are advised of the decision-making factors considered in their situation and how these factors affect their request for service.
- If reductions in support are to occur, the decision should attempt to avoid undue hardship for an individual and/or family. Where possible, consideration should be given to a phased-in approach over a reasonable period of time or as negotiated with the individual or family.
- The response to the individual or family includes clear and consistent communication of locally identified priorities, where applicable, and the right of the family to ask for a review.

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### **STANDARDS**

Special Services at Home is committed to:

- Decision-making that adheres to the service principles.
- A review process based on an individual assessment of the request.
- A holistic perspective that takes all decision-making factors into account.
- Decision-making that varies in response to the variety of service situations presented.
- An equitable approach which results in consistent, objective, individualized decisions.
- Decision-making and communication processes that are sensitive to language and culture.
- Provision of written rationale for decisions.
- Communication of locally-identified priorities, where applicable.

### **FILE REVIEW INDICATORS**

Analysis of decisions made over time should demonstrate that SSAH service principles have been utilized. Analysis of equitable treatment can best be made by comparing funding levels authorized within the same fiscal year and in a limited number of consecutive fiscal years. Specific indicators include documentation of a process that provides evidence of:

1. Consideration of the unique aspects of each situation, including language and culture.
2. Consideration of all other appropriate personal and community supports.
3. The value of the services authorized over a full year varies between families, reflecting differing costs of services in different areas.
4. Individuals with the same kind of disabling condition and people with similar family needs receiving different funding amounts, demonstrating a response to individual factors.
5. Files containing a copy of written rationale for a decision which has been sent to the applicant.
6. Locally-identified priorities that have been communicated to the applicant, where applicable.