
Guidelines for the Special Services at Home Program



Revised February 2004 to reflect Regional office structure and Ministry name change wording only.

GUIDELINES

The first time a word defined in the glossary appears in the text; it will be in UPPER CASE letters.

INTRODUCTION

Special Services at Home (SSAH) is intended to provide supports to:

a) Individuals living at home with their FAMILIES

and

b) Families caring for family members

who have a disability and as a result have special needs, which require services beyond care normally, provided by family. When this is the case, the government has a commitment to assist with the costs and required services by supplying a range of family support services. SSAH is one of these ranges of community services for families and is based on the belief that families are primary caregivers for individuals with disabilities. As a result, SSAH focuses on the provision of funds to assist families to purchase supports, which are not otherwise available in the community.

The Special Services at Home Program has developed as one model of individualized consumer-directed funding which has the potential for much broader application in the service system for people who are disabled.

Special Services at Home was initiated in 1982 to help CHILDREN with DISABILITIES to live at home with their families and to prevent their institutionalization. Families welcomed the new program because it tailored services to the individual and considered the needs of the family as a whole. Although the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) has committed additional funds on several occasions since 1982, the program faces the continuing challenge of responding appropriately to a growing demand while managing with the funds available.

There is an ongoing effort on the part of MCSS and other ministries to clarify respective roles and responsibilities and to modify MAINSTREAM SERVICES for individuals with disabilities.

Special Services at Home has successfully supported children to live as independently as possible with their own families in their own communities. This experience, as well as the program's popularity with families, are the reasons for extending the program to new groups. ADULTS with developmental disabilities

and children with PHYSICAL DISABILITIES, who are living at home with their families, are now eligible for Special Services at Home. These revised guidelines apply to all eligible groups.

PURPOSE

The goal of the SSAH Program is to help individuals with disabilities to live at home with their families. It helps them by providing INDIVIDUALIZED FUNDING, on a time-limited basis, to purchase supports and services not available elsewhere in the community.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR SSAH

Children who have a developmental disability or a physical disability, and adults who have 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 a normal family responsibility and,
- are living at home with their families.

The ongoing functional limitation must be documented by a professional, such as a physician, audiologist or psychologist.

Applications will be reviewed based on the criteria outlined in the decision-making process on page 9. Anyone concerned with the needs of an individual with a disability who may be eligible for SSAH should contact the local REGIONAL OFFICE of the Ministry of Community and Social Services for applications and for information and assistance with the program.

NEEDS RECOGNIZED AND SERVICES FUNDED

Individuals with disabilities and their families may identify a broad variety of needs. These could include needs for housing, specialized equipment, education and training, employment, attendant care; and the opportunity to learn new skills, to maintain or recover old ones, to socialize, to develop personal relations, and so on.

The Special Services at Home program recognizes that it cannot meet all human needs. As a result, its resources are focused on meeting needs broadly described as:

- personal development and growth and/or
- family relief and support.

These needs are described on pages 4, 5 and 6.

In addition, the needs which can be funded under SSAH are ones that:

- cannot be met by a service available elsewhere in the local community, for example the Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities Program.

Special Services at Home values the participation of individuals with disabilities in their communities. Services funded should promote the involvement of the individual in everyday community life.

The following services may be considered for funding under Special Services at Home.

1) Personal Development and Growth

Personal development and growth services focus on the needs of individuals to acquire new skills and capacities. The purpose of the program is to help the individual achieve a specific goal.

Family members may benefit indirectly from Personal Development and Growth services because of the assistance made available or the skills learned. However, the overall goal is to enable the individual to learn and develop.

Funding can be used to provide the human resources necessary to carry out programs. Usually a special services worker provides direct assistance to the individual with a disability. Direct assistance will:

- address specific personal development and growth needs,
- focus on a goal (outcome expected) within a projected time frame,
- follow a plan for delivery of programming (method) and
- periodically review the progress made and the continuing appropriateness of the goals and plans.

A broad range of individual needs can be addressed with this type of programming. Some examples are activities of daily living, behavioural programming, mobility, communication, social skills, developmental programming, etc.

The family and the individual should develop the goals and delivery plans either by themselves, or in conjunction with a professional or community agency. Some goals and plans may be left broadly defined.

However, in specialized areas of programming, goals and delivery plans should be more closely defined. The assistance of a professional may be required to provide expertise. Some examples of specialized areas are sign language, programs targeting self-injurious behaviour, carry-over of programs designed by a professional etc.

The professional may, via the MEDIATOR MODEL, assist in identifying the goals, intervention techniques or activities, initial training of those providing direct service, and ongoing monitoring of the program.

Where a service is delivered depends on the appropriateness of the setting to the goals established, and on the needs of the family and the individual. A variety of locations may be used, e.g. home, community settings (shops, parks), vehicles while in transit, community services/programs (scouting groups, recreation programs).

Services to infants. Special Services at Home recognizes that INFANCY is one the crucial periods in the healthy development of an individual, and services to infants are best provided within a family context. For these reasons, infants can also receive Personal Development and Growth services through Special Services at Home. The service should be provided within a mediator model approach, using the expertise of qualified professionals in the field of infancy.

2) Family Relief and Support

Family Relief and Support services recognize the additional responsibilities of families caring for a family member with a disability. The purpose of the service is to assist families by providing respite/parent relief, and related home support services.

The individual with a disability will, in many cases, directly benefit from these services. However, the overall goal is to assist the family to meet their identified needs.

Funding can be used to provide the services or human resources required for Family Relief and Support. The most common type of service delivery uses special services workers to provide direct assistance to the individual. Direct assistance to the individual with a disability should:

- allow for the continuation of his/her established programmes (e.g. behavioural programming, use of sign language) and routines,
- ensure appropriate care, guidance, and personal safety and,
- provide opportunities for participation in community life and functional learning.

Special services workers may, therefore, require closer involvement with the individual, and a greater skill level, than that expected in babysitting or adult companion sitting service.

Where the service is delivered will depend on the needs of the family and the individual, and the appropriateness of the setting. A variety of locations may be used, e.g. home, community settings (shops, parks), vehicles while in transit, community services or programs (scouting groups, recreation programs), or while on vacation.

Special Services at Home may consider time-limited request for INDIRECT ASSISTANCE to families, instead of the direct service, if the assistance:

- enables the family to play a greater role in meeting the needs of the individual with a disability, e.g. care of sibling so parent can work with individual,
- maintains the individuals' skills and capabilities and,
- provides opportunities for more effective service delivery.

Nursing Respite. Where indicated by a professional assessment of the need, and where all alternative resources, including Home Care, have been exhausted, respite may be provided by an individual holding a certificate of competency as a registered nurse or registered nursing assistant under Part IV of the Health Disciplines Act.

Notes on Services Funded

Specific supports and services may be a critical factor in the delivery of Personal Development and Growth, or Family Relief and Support Services. In some situations, requests for these supports and services listed below may be considered for funding if they cannot be provided in any other way.

- a) Training: Family members or special services workers may need training to understand and respond to the needs of the individual. Funding may be considered on a time-limited basis, if the training –
- reflects specialized needs over and above initial orientation requirements,
 - provides opportunities for more effective service delivery and,
 - maintains the individual's skills and capacities.

- b) Reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses: Regional Offices have discretion to establish local policy on authorization of the following types of expenses, and under what circumstances
- advertising for recruitment of special services workers,
 - travel costs,
 - supplies required to implement the programme,
 - additional liability insurance required to cover the services provided.
- c) Exceptional Circumstances: The following services, although not normally funded through Special Services at Home, may receive exceptional consideration for funding under Personal Development and Growth and/or Family Relief and Support.
- Child care: Where the Regional Office determines that the cost of child care exceeds regular costs because of the needs of the child as a result of the disability, the Regional Office may consider funding the portion of the fee over and above regular costs. Consideration may also be given to childcare costs not normally met by families.
 - Camp and recreation fees: Where the Regional Office determines that the cost of camp or recreation services exceeds regular costs because of the disability of the individual, the Regional Office may consider funding costs over and above the regular fee.
 - Professional services: Consideration may be given to funding professional consultation when it is required to provide service under a mediator model, but is not available in the community.
- d) Services Outside Ontario: Services authorized by Special Services at Home for Ontario residents are generally purchased in Ontario. In exceptional circumstances, such as a service outside Ontario being more economical and accessible than a similar service inside Ontario, Special Services at Home may fund service outside Ontario with the approval of the Regional Director.

SERVICES NOT FUNDED

The following services are not funded under SSAH:

- 1) Basic Care – Costs related to caring for the basic needs of children or dependent family members. Examples of these costs include food,

clothing, diapers, babysitting, childcare, dental care, ROUTINE MEDICAL COSTS and MEDICAL FEES IN EXCESS OF THE OHIP FEE SCHEDULE.

- 2) Child Care Fees – Regular costs of centre-based, family or informal child care or nursery school services which a family normally meets.
- 3) Basic Camp and Recreation Fees – Regular recreation costs which a family normally covers, such as overnight/day camp programs and swimming programs.
- 4) Education and Employment – Costs related to education, supported employment and vocational activities.
- 5) ASSISTIVE DEVICES, specialized equipment and dental service.
- 6) Home Modifications.
- 7) Professional Services – With two exceptions, the services of speech and language pathologists, physiotherapists, nurses, nursing assistants, occupational therapists, psychologists and other similar professionals are not eligible for funding through the SSAH program. These services should be obtained from an established community resource. The two exceptions are nursing services required for respite care and a professional to monitor the mediator model, if not available otherwise.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Parents, family members, legal guardians and individuals that are 16 years of age and over may apply. They may do so alone or with the assistance of an agency, professional or any person of the individual's or family's choice.

Applications for SSAH must be made on MCSS forms available from the Regional Office. This ensures each application is reviewed for eligibility and funding according to these guidelines. Applications will be reviewed to determine whether the family/individual has considered other funding sources. The application should include an identification of the need for supports or services, and documentation from appropriate resources. Families and/or individuals will receive a written decision about their funding request from the Ministry within reasonable time. Forms may be obtained from the Regional Office of MCSS.

INFORMATION REQUESTED IN THE APPLICATION PROCESS

- 1) Identifying information pertaining to the individual and family – name, address, date of birth, telephone number, etc.,

- 2) Description of applicant/individual requiring support – nature of the ongoing functional limitation, the need for supports or services that arise from the limitation, the request that responds to those needs and the priority among request,
- 3) Detailed description of the request – indication of the level of support required and the estimated costs,
- 4) Outline of the services being received and resources that have been explored. Please give results and,
- 5) Signatures – individual/family member signs to declare that all information given is true to the best of their knowledge and also to give consent to the release of information about the individual from an agency, physician, psychologist, etc.

REAPPLICATION

A new application form must be completed each time a request for service is made to the program. Specifically, a new application form is required in each of these instances:

- a) renewal of services,
 - b) following the relocation of the applicant to an area served by a different Regional Office, and,
 - c) a request for enhanced levels of service, or for a different type of service.
- Please note that in order to avoid interruptions in service, applications for renewals or following relocation should be made two months prior to the expiry of the current Special Services at Home authorization.

DECISION MAKING

Regional offices will approve funds based on the following factors:

- Service needs as expressed by the individual and/or family,
- Family needs to deal with stress and enhance their ability to cope,
- Complexity of the supports required as a result of the level of the ongoing functional limitation,
- Supports and services currently available and appropriate,

- Support networks of the individual and family,
- Locally identified priorities and/or,
- Availability of funds.

SSAH funds services and supports for a maximum of one year at a time. There is no retroactive funding for new services or for increased levels of service. That is, approvals for these requests cannot be backdated to the date of application.

FAMILIES RELOCATING

When families move to an area served by a different Regional Office, and the transferring Regional Office has authorized funding, services should be continued for two months after the date of the move.

The special agreements officer or case manager/service co-ordinator in the original location may help the family make contact with program staff in the new location. This is to ease transitional planning so the family does not undergo a break in support.

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 process, each focusing on the fairness of the decision made at the previous level. This ensures that all factors listed in the decision-making section have been followed.

FIRST LEVEL

The family and/or individual starts a review by writing to the Regional Director within 20 working days of receiving the decision letter. The family and/or 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 individual will be:

- ▶ provided with a copy of a Summary of these Guidelines and asked to provide evidence that the Guidelines have not been applied to their own situation

- ▶ invited to provide additional supporting information, and
- ▶ will have the opportunity for a meeting with the Regional Director or his/her designate.

Upon receipt of a request for a 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 Regional Director 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, Regional 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 family's application was treated fairly, equitably and the family, new or otherwise, was given fair consideration for the available funds; and,
- ▶ provide a description of the next step in the review process.

SECOND LEVEL

If, after receiving the decision from the Regional 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 Regional 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 who will:

- ▶ review the steps taken at the regional level to ensure the review process at the first level was followed
- ▶ collect information from the family to determine the family's understanding about the process and the fairness of the decision made at the first level
- ▶ review the information provided by the Regional Office
- ▶ review information from other sources, e.g., local service providers involved with the family, and

- ▶ provide recommendations to the ADM. In their review, the ADM will focus on the fairness of the decision made at the first level of the review and ensure:
 - decision-making reflects the content and intent of these Guidelines which inform and guide SSAH program delivery
 - an individualized approach, based on the uniqueness of the situation of each applicant, and
 - an equitable response.

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

In setting aside a decision of Regional Offices, the ADM will focus on the fairness of the decision made and will not prescribe a level of support in each situation. 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 working days of receiving the request for a review and/or additional information.

Limitations to the Review Process

The review process is not intended to:

- change or alter the current guidelines
- be the mechanism that will lead to an increase in the resources available to this program

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

FUNDING

The following section provides general information on the funding procedure:

- Funds are allocated to Regional Offices of the Ministry of Community and Social Services to provide the program.
- Signing authority for the approval of SSAH is delegated to positions or individuals designated by the Regional Director.
- Yearly funding above \$10,000 is considered extraordinary and must be approved by the Regional Program Manager.

- Requests can be made for the full cost of the service or any portion thereof.

ACCOUNTABILITY

A report is required at least once throughout the contract to assess program effectiveness. Regional Office staff, in consultation with individuals/families, will determine the nature and frequency of reports.

The Ministry is responsible for ongoing program monitoring which will focus on financial accountability and program utilization.

With respect to program utilization, the following data is being collected on a quarterly basis:

- number and flow of requests and approvals,
- number of reviews,
- numbers of individuals previously served,
- number of new individuals served and,
- total number of individuals served this fiscal year.

The Ministry, through its Regional Offices, is responsible for collecting program utilization and financial accountability information. In addition to ongoing monitoring, this information will be used from time to time to evaluate the delivery of the program and whether program and policy goals are being achieved.

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THE
SPECIAL SERVICES AT HOME GUIDELINES**

May 1, 1991

ADULT:

Adult means a person eighteen years of age and over.

REGIONAL OFFICE:

Co-ordinates the functions of the Ministry of Community and Social Services in meeting the overall goals and objectives of the Ministry. There are 9 Regional Offices located throughout the Province.

In the Northern Region of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, program delivery functions are carried out by local offices located in four communities across the North.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES:

The Assistive Devices Program (ADP) is a program of the Ontario Ministry of Health which provides Ontario residents who have long term disabilities with assistance in paying for certain necessary equipment and supplies (e.g. wheelchairs, artificial limbs, respiratory equipment, brailers).

CHILD:

"Child means a person under the age of eighteen years". The Child and Family Services Act, S.O. 1984, Chapter 55.

DEAF-BLINDNESS:

"An individual with deaf-blindness is one who, because of a combined incidence of deafness and blindness, is multi-sensory deprived resulting in significant difficulties in pursuing educational, vocational, avocational, and social skills." Task Force Report on Service to Deaf/Blind Person in Ontario, 1984.

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY:

Developmental disability is defined as “a condition of mental impairment present or occurring in a person’s formative years that is associated with limitations in adaptive behaviour”. (This definition is used for the term “developmental handicap” in The Developmental Services Act, R.S.O. 1980, Chapter 118, and The Child and Family Services Act, S.O. 1984, Chapter 55).

A child or adult with deaf-blindness may be considered eligible for Special Services at Home as a person with a developmental disability. The determination of eligibility will be based solely on the physical disability of deaf-blindness.

FAMILY:

Means persons related by kinship as recognized in law but limited to: spouses, parents, siblings, grandparents, children, grandchildren, aunts, uncles and cousins, and including step-parents and step-siblings, where there has been a settled intention to treat the individual as a member of the family.

On the basis of an individual exception, a Regional Office may consider an application on behalf of a child or adult, who would otherwise be eligible but is not living with his/her own family, as long as –

- the person is living in a family type of situation, and
- there has been a settled intention to treat the person as a member of the family and
- the family is not receiving assistance from a child welfare authority or other service provider (e.g. foster home, Family Home Program) toward the maintenance of the person and
- the person does not have the primary role of a boarder, roomer or lodger within the household.

Individuals will be considered to be “living at home with their families” during the time they reside with family member(s).

INDIVIDUALIZED FUNDING:

Individualized funding refers to the allocation of public funds to individuals rather than to agencies or programs.

INDIRECT ASSISTANCE:

Assistance which relieves family members of specific family or household responsibilities and enables them to play a greater role in meeting the needs of the individual with the disability.

INFANCY:

From birth to thirty months of age chronologically, a child is considered an infant. Infant Development Program Guidelines, March 1987.

MAINSTREAM SERVICES:

Services that are widely accepted and available for use by the general public. They are generally not designed for any particular group but are generic in nature.

MEDIATOR MODEL:

Intervention by parents or non-professional direct service staff under the supervision of a professional. The role of the professional in the 'mediator model' is to assist the family to develop a program plan, including goals and specific interventions or activities, and to train and supervise the person carrying out the program.

MEDICAL FEES IN EXCESS OF OHIP FEE SCHEDULE:

Costs for services that are over and above what OHIP will cover, e.g. additional visits to a chiropractor or optometrist.

ONGOING FUNCTIONAL LIMITATIONS:

Will limit an individual's capacity to carry out those activities or normal living, which are necessary to acquire independence and well being. These limitations assume that asks associated with normal age appropriate developmental stages cannot be accomplished without assistance.

PHYSICAL DISABILITY:

A restriction or lack of ability to perform an essential physical activity in a manner or within the range considered normal for a person. This shall include individuals with other sensory impairments of deafness or of blindness.

The effects of the disabling condition may be visible (as with neurological, neuromuscular, spinal cord injury disorders or conditions described as "medically fragile") or invisible (as with sensory impairment and conditions such as heart disease, epilepsy and so on).

ROUTINE MEDICAL COSTS:

Routine medical costs are:

- fees for assessments, filling out forms, transferring records, registration of new patients, and other procedures not insured under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan, e.g. naturopaths, podiatrists, etc; and
- costs covered under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan.