

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REVIEW CONSULTATION DISCUSSION PAPER #2 Monday February 27, 2012

Regent Park Community Health Centre, CRC, CCL& D, My Regent Park, K-club and RPNI

13 Participants

Questions for this consultation were taken from the Social Assistance Review Discussion Paper2: Approaches for Reform

A. Do you think people on Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support should get different amounts of money or different benefits (dental coverage)

- There was concern that ODSP benefits have already been eroding over time
- Some participants thought that both groups should receive equal but adequate rates to afford the actual costs of living
- There was big concern that they will reduce ODSP to the lower amount provided by Ontario Works.
- Ontario Works only covers some dental work and people on ODSP fear they would lose the few benefits they have now
- Participants voice concern that the special dietary needs and associated costs of some disabilities should be taken into account when setting benefit rates
- Current rules act as a disincentive for ODSP clients who want to work such as the claw back of 50 cents on every dollar earned from employment

B. Other than people with severe disabilities, are there other groups that should be exempted from being required to participate in job training or work opportunities?

- contrary to the myths, there are people who would choose to work
- Need for flexibility in accommodating client's individual capacity and skills.

C. What penalties would be reasonable for people who misuse the system?

- Jail time according to the amount of years cheating has happened
- Criminal record
- Some mentioned addressing the cost factor realistically pursuing money that has been obtained through cheating (
- Does not make sense to spend more on enforcement, than what you can recover)
- The lower social assistance rates encourage such behaviors

D. Employment Services How can they be made more effective?

- Need for flexibility in accommodating client's individual capacity and skills.
- The failures of the labour market need to be addressed first and more job creation in the labour market is essential
- People have skills, have graduated from college/university but can't get the work they were trained or educated to do.
- On the job training/apprenticeship opportunities
- Lack of experience creates barriers to entering the job market
- Expand and provide proper job accommodations for people with disabilities
- Job placements should be in-line with client's existing skills
- Clear understanding/communication on how to access to programs through Toronto Employment & Social Services and Ontario Employment programs
Such as limitations or lack of restrictions on how many agencies one can sign up with to access job training or employment services
- Effective training for job finding staff
- Lack of clear information about use of programs keeps people from accessing job finding services
- Information about services is not being provided in a variety of languages-making programs less accessible
- Municipal and provincial employment programs should be merged to avoid duplication of services
- Current programs at different levels create confusion on where people are supposed to go to access employment supports or job finding assistance
- Closing the gaps to provide seamless services from the resume help to finding actual employment is important to helping people more forward
- There is a clear need to address discrimination to open up opportunities for people with disabilities. A lack of understanding of how to accommodate persons with disabilities can't be legislated; it requires attitude change and seeing the value in people's abilities.
- There also remains a clear need to address racism, some people can't get jobs because they have an accent
- Mentorship opportunities would be helpful between people who have disabilities and those with disabilities have been successful in obtaining employment in the field of their choice.

5. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

Ontario Works rates only allow rent and some food (not enough and it must be discount goods) There is no money left to buy clothes like winter coats & boots.

The process and turnaround time of the Discussion Paper 2 has been too short
The report should be available in large print, alternative formats, clear language and there should be multilingual versions.

Too many gaps between eligibility for the various income support programs—often rising costs attributed to the rules cause families to have their benefit levels reduced. (TCHC subsidies)

Childcare acknowledges OSAP as income yet TCHC doesn't consider it as income. Programs operate in their own silos & don't talk to each other. There is no harmony across systems.

There is disincentive to work when you have less money than on assistance

If they raise rates and provide decent benefits then there will be less cheating

People who work substandard jobs don't make enough money. Some don't know that they may qualify for available income supports.

Childcare funding should take the need for childcare outside of daytime hours into account to assist parents who don't work "regular 9-5" hours with their childcare needs and their ability to participate in the job market.