

**Ministry of Children,  
Community and Social  
Services**

Social Assistance Operations  
Division

Social Assistance Policy,  
Planning and Innovation  
Division

**Ministère des Services à  
l'enfance et des Services  
sociaux et communautaires**

Division des opérations  
relative à l'aide sociale

Division des politiques, de la  
planification et de l'innovation en  
matière d'aide sociale



September 30, 2020

**MEMORANDUM TO:** Consolidated Municipal Service Managers Commissioners  
District Social Services Boards Chief Administrative Officers

**FROM:** Keith Palmer  
Assistant Deputy Minister

Nelson Loureiro  
Assistant Deputy Minister

**SUBJECT: Social Assistance Recovery and Renewal Update**

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Today, the government announced its plan to support economic recovery and employment through a new recovery and renewal plan for social assistance.

We want to provide you with an update on social assistance recovery planning and the first phase of changes that will be proceeding across the province, **recognizing that you and your staff have been actively involved to varying degrees in this work.** As we begin economic recovery following the COVID-19 outbreak, people are counting on us more than ever before to give them a bridge back to independence. At the same time, the government is counting on Ontarians to help the economy revive and thrive again.

Building on what we have learned during the COVID-19 outbreak, and the need to fundamentally change ways of delivering services, the first phase of the social assistance recovery and renewal plan, to roll out over the next few months, will be focused on four key areas:

- **Accelerated digital delivery solutions**, including the launch of a new and easy-to-use Social Assistance Digital Application and expansion of the MyBenefits digital platform to improve access for people receiving social

assistance and allow two-way digital messaging between clients and caseworkers.

- **Centralized and automated delivery**, beginning with centralized intake pilots across several municipalities and centralization of benefits in several ODSP offices that reduce paperwork, giving caseworkers more time to support clients through crisis and helping them get back to work.
- **Risk-based eligibility review**, to be developed alongside the centralized intake pilots, that uses provincial, federal and third-party sources to make financial assistance processing faster, while strengthening program integrity.
- **Access to employment and training**, partnering with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development to support people to get back to work, including people with disabilities who have been particularly hard hit by job losses during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The province, municipalities and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) face significant change — on top of the changes we've all experienced through the pandemic. We recognize that, and we value the role municipalities, DSAABs and the staff play in directly supporting clients. Clients are our shared purpose. Municipal and DSSAB staff truly alter the course of people's lives and our new plan will help focus on this important work.

Municipalities and DSAABs have a critical role as service delivery partners and will be key partners in enhancing our social assistance system and helping clients get back to work. Moving forward, collaboration and engagement with municipal Ontario Works delivery agents will be essential to develop and implement a plan for recovery. A plan that will look at a shared vision for social assistance to ensure that we are providing and connecting people to the right services at the right time. If you have any questions about this work, please reach out to Lindsay Jones, Director of the Social Assistance Reform Program Management Branch at [Lindsay.Jones@ontario.ca](mailto:Lindsay.Jones@ontario.ca).

Further detail about the plan is available in the attached documents.

We look forward to working with you to help people access the supports they need and creating a sustainable system that provides pathways to jobs and success.

Sincerely,



Keith Palmer  
Assistant Deputy Minister



Nelson Loureiro  
Assistant Deputy Minister

**Attachments:** Q&A; social assistance recovery placemat; centralized intake prototype presentation.

**Cc:**

Ontario Works Administrators

Tom Azouz, Co-Chair, Provincial-Municipal Social Services and Employment Committee

Monika Turner, Co-Chair, Provincial-Municipal Social Services and Employment Committee