

Memorandum

To: Employment Ontario Delivery Partners

From: Andrew Irvine, Assistant Deputy Minister (A)
Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development

Date: January 28, 2021

Subject: Employment Services Transformation – Integration Phase

Dear Employment Ontario partners:

Ontario has reached another important milestone in the ongoing transformation of employment services.

As scheduled, the final phase of Employment Services Transformation (EST), Phase III- Integrated Employment Service Delivery, first announced in 2019, has begun in the three prototype catchment areas.

Effective January 1, 2021, service system managers (SSM) are responsible for employment services for Ontario Works (OW) recipients. SSMs are also responsible for the planning, design and delivery of Employment Ontario and Ontario Disability Support Program employment services within the identified catchment area. During this phase, SSMs will work closely with ODSP offices and local municipalities, who will continue to deliver income support, benefits and life stabilization supports.

This represents an important step in the integration of the province's employment system, and ongoing transformation of employment services. These changes are part of the ministry's commitment to delivering the highest quality employment and training services for the people of Ontario, and ensuring that job seekers, businesses and communities receive the services they need.

Changes Within the Prototype Catchment Areas

During the Planning and Transition Phases, SSMs established plans for service delivery under the new integrated delivery model. These plans were developed in conjunction with delivery and community partners. SSMs have considered making changes to the composition of their service delivery network. Based on information provided through Transition Phase Outcomes submissions, SSMs are not planning any major changes to their local networks. SSMs plan to retain their existing providers and will continue working closely with them to deliver services and meet service targets.

Some providers may opt not to renew their service delivery contracts with the SSMs. However, any decision not to continue to provide services is entirely the choice of the service provider organization.

EO clients who continue to have active service plans after January 1st, 2021 will continue to be supported in progressing towards their employment goals. These clients will receive services until they no longer need supports i.e., they exit their service plan. SSMs are required to complete the associated follow-ups for these clients. Starting January 1st, all new clients can access employment services through the SSM's service provider network.

As system steward, the ministry continues to work closely with SSMs to ensure that there are no gaps in service for clients. This includes individuals with specialized needs. SSMs are required to ensure clients have access to ongoing supports when implementing any changes, while maintaining a healthy and resilient network. SSMs are also required to ensure reasonable access to in-person service delivery sites, with Ministry required minimum driving time standards.

Information for Indigenous Providers

It is important to note that the changes being introduced in the prototype phase will not apply to the services provided by First Nations on-reserve. There will be no immediate changes to the access and delivery of employment services for clients in the prototype catchment areas, including First Nations clients who access employment and training services off-reserve.

Next Steps

As implementation continues in the prototype regions, MLTSD and partner ministries will engage with SSMS to achieve better outcomes for clients through the Joint Ministry-SSM Committee, and engage key organizations along with SSMS to support people with disabilities through the Reference Group on Employment Services for People with Disabilities.

As outcomes from the prototype areas become available, these will be used to inform policy and design for subsequent phases of transformation. As well, lessons learned from the prototype regions will be applied to the future roll-out across the province. Once timelines for full provincial implementation have been established, they will be communicated with the Network. The ministry remains committed to providing regular communications to help our providers understand and prepare for any changes.

Outside of the prototype regions, the MLTSD will continue to work with service delivery partners across the province to plan and deliver stronger, locally focused employment and social assistance services that help more people find and keep jobs.

Looking Ahead

As you know, Ontario's employment and training programs are more critical than ever in responding to the economic uncertainty that jobseekers, workers and employers are experiencing in the province. Your organization's continued work adjusting how services are delivered in your area represents an important part of the government's efforts to help people and businesses deal with economic impacts of COVID-19, and help more people find and keep quality jobs.

Thank you for your ongoing collaboration as we modernize Ontario's employment and training system.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Andrew Irvine
Assistant Deputy Minister (A)
Employment and Training Division

Cc:

David Carter-Whitney, Assistant Deputy Minister, Workforce Policy and Innovation Division

Nelson Loureiro, Assistant Deputy Minister, Social Assistance Innovation, Implementation and Policy Division, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

Drew Vanderduim, (A) Assistant Deputy Minister, Social Assistance Operations Division, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services