



Family Support & Resource Network

Helping children with disabilities reach their potential...because strong families create strong communities.



Ontario Disability Support Program (O.D.S.P.)

For parents of teens with disabilities

What you should know about future government disability pensions for your child.

When your child with a disability turns 18 he/she may qualify to receive a monthly pension called the O.D.S.P. (Ontario Disability Support Program.) Your child will have to go through an application process in order to receive this fund. Note that each government ministry decides 'when' your child is an adult, using a different age. It is a good idea to investigate the outcome of any funding you're currently receiving, related to your child's official status as an adult.

Depending upon the school program in which your child is currently enrolled, he/she might be able to remain there until the age of 21. The health system, on the other hand, would allow (even require, in some cases) your child at the age of 16 to move from a pediatric service to an adult service. Some forms of funding are discontinued at the age of 18, such as the respite funding offered to families who have children who are considered 'medically fragile' by the Ministry of Health. A.C.S.D. (formerly Handicapped Children's Benefits) offered to families of low income to use for costs related to their child with a disability, is also discontinued at that age.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Apply for O.D.S.P. funding 6 months before 18th birthday
- Contact either Community Living agency for assistance with filling out forms

- ALWAYS keep copies of any form you ever receive or send
- There is an internal appeal process if you are turned down for O.D.S.P.
- You will need to gather several documents before submitting your application

When to Apply?

It is advisable to apply for the O.D.S.P. funding 6 months prior to your child's 18th birthday.

Where to Apply?

The current Ministry of Community Family and Children's Services Chatham-Kent office is:

1023 Richmond St. W.,
P.O. Box 685,
Chatham, N7M 5J5

Telephone: 519-352-5040 or
1-800-265-2705
TTY: 519-352-6008
Fax: 519-352-2813

In some cases it is possible to request a 'pre-interview' during which the parent is able to discuss the type of information that needs to be gathered, and how best the young person is to fill out the forms.



Within the medical section of the application form you will need documentation attesting to your son/daughter's needs and diagnosis from certified physicians and therapists

Your Initial Contact

Phone them up and ask for an application form to be mailed to your home (or arrange to pick one up yourself) Ask the person on the telephone what types of documentation you will need to gather before the appointment.

Your teen must accompany you to any interviews since it is his/her funding for which you are applying. The actual appointment need not be at their office. You can request that they come to your home if it is too difficult for you to transport your son or daughter.

In some cases it is possible to request a 'pre-interview' during which the parent is able to discuss the type of information that needs to be gathered, and how best the young person is to fill out the forms (often with the help of an adult).

For assistance filling out the forms, contact either of the Community Living agencies at 352-1174 or 627-0776, as well as Family Support & Resource Network at 352-7827.

The O.D.S.P. Application Form

The application process comes in sections: a portion to write and describe your child's current activities of daily living, a self-report, a medical section and a financial section in which your child's (not your) personal finances are scrutinized. Note that the O.D.S.P. related to limited funding for employment supports (i.e. O.D.S.P.- E.S.) is an entirely different form and program!

What you need to gather:

In order to fill out the application forms and attend the interview you will need the following documentation for your child:

- A health card
- A social insurance number/card
- Birth certificate
- If your child has his/her own bank account then you will need a current bank statement and personal bank pass book
- High school records to verify his/her student status
- Documentation of any Canada Savings Bonds or investments in your child's name
- A list of any other assets in your child's name
- Records of dates of former hospitalizations (and/or names of pertinent physicians, hospitals etc.)

The Application Form and Documentation

Within the medical section of the application form you will need documentation attesting to your son/daughter's needs and diagnosis from certified physicians and therapists.

Make sure that the physicians and/or therapists understand the need to use such language as "needs constant supervision for reasons of safety", "has no understanding of danger", "vulnerable to...", "safety issues of...", "it is essential that ___ receive...", and so on (if these phrases are an accurate description of your child's needs.) This is especially critical if your child has a disability that may not be physically apparent.

In order to include multiple reports, simply photocopy the appropriate sections and then attach them to the application form once completed. You may want to have the forms filled out by a neurologist, pediatrician, psychiatrist, optometrist (i.e. visual impairment) etc. Your child may have assistance in filling in the self-report and all other areas that you deem necessary.

There is a section in which you are required to list past hospitalizations. Don't panic if you have not recorded the dates over the years. You can call the records departments of the various hospitals and request a copy of their records which lists all dates (for a cost). You might also ask the physicians involved to write a note attesting to multiple hospitalizations of your child.

Once you have filled out the forms, send them in as soon as possible and **record the day that you mailed them.** **From this point on you must keep track of the date when you receive any responses from them as well.** The ministry offices function by following guide lines related to 'when' they receive your responses. Once your application form is received they will then arrange the interview.

The O.D.S.P. Funding

- If a child/teen **remains at home**, parents can ask him/her to pay 'room and board' which would be a portion of a total monthly pension of about \$700. It is possible to claim the child as a tenant, in which case you can charge 'rent' but this must be claimed on your income tax.



O.D.S.P. provides the employment supports that people with disabilities need to get and keep jobs. The program provides better supports to people with disabilities who can and do want to work.

- If the individual is to live on his/her own then the pension is higher – currently about \$900 a month. Note that if your son/daughter lives in a building that is not the family home, your SSAH (Special Services at Home) funding will be discontinued.
- Within the O.D.S.P. monthly funding there is also a section to help you pay for additional expenses such as medical transportation (for example mileage to drive to London to the dentist, doctor etc.), funding to cover basic dental expenses, incontinence supplies, prescription drugs, insulin supplies and so on. Be sure to ask the interviewer, how you can receive these allotments.
- Once your child begins to receive the monthly cheques you or he/she will have to fill out several monthly forms verifying these additional expenses as well as proof of any money earned during the PAST month.
- Only when monthly earnings are well in excess of the monthly pension does the possibility of suspension or termination exist. At that point you will have to go through an appeal.
- If your child makes an appeal make sure this is within the allotted time.
- Your son/daughter is entitled to legal aid. Call the local legal assistance office (in Chatham-Kent it is on 6 Harvey St., 351-6771). Your child must meet certain financial guidelines.
- **Always send the forms in on time.**
- **ALWAYS KEEP COPIES of any form you ever receive or send.**
- You will also be obligated to have your son or daughter fill out an annual income tax form from this point on.
- Buy a separate file box, preferably with tabs that list months, just for keeping the documentation in order.

If your child cannot handle money, create a separate bank account for the purpose of handling this funding, giving yourself the signing authority for the account. Some O.D.S.P. offices request that the parent signs a trusteeship form, at the time of the interview. You do not need to do this immediately. Talk to a lawyer before making any legal decisions of this sort.

When Individuals Are Turned Down For O.D.S.P.

There is an internal appeal process if you are turned down for O.D.S.P. Your 18 year old is entitled to legal aid to do the appeal.

If you are turned down by O.D.S.P., but accepted by Ontario Works, they may be able to provide the documentation that you need to the O.D.S.P. office, validating that your son/daughter cannot work, once they have documented your child's inability to hold down a job, over a period of weeks or months.

There are several levels of appeal ending with an appointment with a traveling judge.

Employment Supports for People with Disabilities

O.D.S.P. provides the employment supports that people with disabilities need to get and keep jobs. The program provides better supports to people with disabilities who can and do want to work.

Employment Supports will offer people with disabilities the opportunity to work, to become independent and to reach their employment potential.

Employment Supports will:

- Let people with disabilities choose which services they need to become employed.
- Recognize that it may take some people longer than others to get where they want to go.
- Provide funding to people with disabilities enabling them to buy the support needed to reach their employment goals.

Who is eligible for Employment Supports?

If a person has a substantial physical or mental impairment that is expected to last one year or more and that presents a substantial barrier to getting employment, they may be eligible for employment supports.

A person must be 16 years or age or older, a resident of Ontario and legally entitle to work in Canada. If a person is receiving, or eligible to receive, disability or rehabilitation benefits from other public or private sources, they may not be eligible for employment supports.

The O.D.S.P. funding related to employment is a separate application and program offered through the Ministry of Community Family and Children's Services. You can apply for this service once your child is out of school.



Family Support & Resource Network



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What types of Services are available?

If a person qualifies for Employment Supports, they can receive a range of supports and services including:

- Help with developing an employment plan
- Employment preparation and training
- Technical aids ranging from mobility devices and reading aids to adapted computers as well as training to use them
- Interpreter, reader, note taker and intervenor services
- Travel, route and orientation training
- Job placement support
- Job coaching and help with job searches
- On-the-job training
- Transportation assistance while on training for a job

Contact the local Ministry of Community & Social Services office for an application package for Employment Supports

O.D.S.P. and Employment

The O.D.S.P. funding related to employment is a separate application and program offered through the Ministry of Community Family and Children's Services. You can apply for this service once your child is out of school

- An assessment of your child's current skill levels may be needed in order to see what training he/she needs in order to be employed.
- IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THIS SORT OF SKILLS ASSESSMENT BE DONE MUCH EARLIER, EVEN PRIOR TO YOUR CHILD'S ENTRANCE INTO HIGH SCHOOL, SO YOU CAN BEGIN BUILDING THOSE VOCATIONAL SKILLS LONG BEFORE THEY NEED TO BE PUT INTO PRACTICE.
- An employment plan must be devised and submitted
- The funding is limited – usually only for about a year, and is for specific assistance (eg. Assessment, job development, job coaching, job maintenance, etc.)
- Employers who may hire your son/daughter can also apply for a short term subsidy to help them pay your son/daughters wages. (i.e. Opportunity Funds, through H.R.D.C., Job Connect or the Summer Jobs Service through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

Other Resources

• All individuals, whether disabled or not, can apply for help from **Ontario Works**. In Chatham the office is located on 435 Grand Avenue West, Box 1230, Chatham, Ontario, N7M 5L8, 351-8573. This program helps train individuals for interviews, writing resumes etc. and, may help locate local volunteer or employment opportunities as well as provide some funding related to employment needs. The goal of Ontario Works is to help the individual become independent of this funding so that those who receive the funding will be expected to demonstrate attempts to find employment and retain a job.

• **Community Living Chatham-Kent, Employment Services**, 351-0460, is comprised of four components: Supported Employment – The skills and talents of individuals are matched with the needs of businesses. Employment Services provides assessment and planning, job development, job coaching and job maintenance. Individuals can access funding for these supports through O.D.S.P. – E.S. program.

• School to Work transition – The **P.R.I.D.E. Program** is a partnership between Employment Services, the two School Boards, several local businesses, and the Toronto School of Business. The students learn about job related life skills in a classroom setting and apply those skills in cooperative education placements.

• **The Summer Student Employment Program** allows students to improve work skills and earn money. Volunteer Placements – Individuals are able to make productive contributions to their community while enhancing skills.

• **Community Living Wallaceburg**, 627-0776 provides ODSP, Employment Supports. Application for funding for ODSP-ES must occur prior to Community Living Wallaceburg becoming involved. The services of Employment Planning, Job Development, Support Coordination, Job Coaching, Job Maintenance and Work Adjustment are currently available.

• You may find all necessary forms on the Ministry website at: <http://www.gov.on.ca/CSS/>

• Eligible individuals are able to access the Disability Dividend from the Opportunities Fund through H.R.D.C. In Chatham-Kent inquire at the local **Canadian Mental Health Association** Office at 240 Grand Avenue West, Chatham, 519-436-6100, fax 519-352-0179.

• In Chatham-Kent there is a private organization, **Expanded Horizons**, 355-0527, to help you approach employers, and set up a job coach.

• It is important to note that funding goes to the organization/business providing the service. For example, an individual is approved for thirty (30) hours of job coaching and selects a business to provide the job coaching. At the conclusion of thirty (30) hours the business invoices the Ministry of Community Family and Children's Services for the thirty (30) hours.