

Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)

This fact sheet is intended to help those affected by serious mental illness, their families and caregivers, to understand the Ontario Disability Support Program by providing an overview of ODSP—what it is, who it is for, the application process, and what it provides.

What is ODSP?

ODSP is a program of the Ontario government (Ministry of Community and Social Services) that provides financial support to individuals with a proven disability who are in financial need. Its goal is to allow such individuals to live independently in the community.

Who qualifies for ODSP income supports?

To meet the requirements for ODSP, you must:

- Be a resident of Ontario.
- Be over the age of 18.
- Qualify financially.
- Qualify under the ODSP definition of a “person with a disability”:
 - There must be a “substantial physical and/or mental impairment”.
 - The impairment is expected to last at least 12 months.
 - The impairment must substantially limit a person’s activities of daily living in at least one of the following three areas: personal care, activities in the community, or activities in the workplace.

If you are a member of a prescribed class (residents of psychiatric hospitals, developmental services facilities, or homes for special care; those receiving Canada Pension Plan – Disability Benefits) you are automatically eligible for ODSP.

How do you know if you qualify financially?

You may qualify if you:

- Are single and have less than a total of \$5,000 in cash, RRSP’s, or in insurance policies.
- Have a spouse or same sex partner and have less than a total of \$7,500 in cash, RRSP’s, or in insurance policies.

If you fit into either of the above categories and have dependent children, you are allowed an additional \$500 in assets for each dependent.

Generally speaking, income earned over \$160 per month is deducted from your ODSP payment. However, ODSP recipients are allowed to hold certain assets. (A complete listing is available at your ODSP office.)

Where do you apply for ODSP?

The first step in applying for ODSP involves setting up an appointment at your local ODSP office. This can be done in person or over the phone. To find the address and phone number of the ODSP office nearest to you, call 1-888-789-4199 or visit the Government of Ontario website www.gov.on.ca and select the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

When your appointment is set up, you will be provided with a list of documents that you need to bring to that appointment, such as: Social Insurance Number, OHIP Number, proof of birth date and immigration status, records of bank statements, assets and income, proof of expenses (e.g. rent receipts), school and employment activities.

What is the application process?

The application process involves two steps. The first step is to determine if you qualify financially; the second step is to determine if you qualify as a “person with a disability”.

- Your appointment at the ODSP office will be to determine if you qualify financially.
- If you qualify financially, you will be given a package of four forms to be filled out, to determine if you qualify as a “person with a disability”. These are:
 - Health Status Report (to be filled out by a doctor),
 - Activities of Daily Living Report (a list of who can fill out this form is provided on the front of the Report),
 - Medical Consent Form (this authorizes your doctor/medical professional to release medical information to the ODSP office), and
 - Self-Report.

Within 90 days of receiving the package, the completed forms are to be mailed to the Disability Adjudication Unit, Ministry of Community and Social Services, where it will be determined if you qualify as a person with a disability. You will be advised of the decision in writing.



How much could you get from ODSP?

The amount you may be eligible to receive depends on your individual situation:

- You could get a maximum of \$959 per month if you are single.
- You could get a maximum of \$1527 per month for a family of two.

What if you require immediate financial assistance?

ODSP offices can only provide financial assistance after your application has been reviewed and a decision had been made regarding your disability. This can often take between four to six months. If you require immediate financial assistance you must contact your local Ontario Works office. To find the Ontario Works office nearest to you, call 1-888-789-4199.

What if you are turned down for ODSP?

If you are turned down for ODSP you have the right to ask for an Internal Review. You must request this in writing within 10 days of receiving the decision. You may provide additional medical information with your Internal Review. If you do not agree with the decision of the Internal Review, you have 30 days in which you may appeal this decision to the Social Benefits Tribunal. If you do not agree with the decision of the Social Benefits Tribunal you may request a Reconsideration of the Decision with a further appeal to the Divisional Court of Ontario. Contact your local Legal Aid Clinic (listed in the white pages of the phone book) for more information on appeals.

What benefits are included in ODSP?

The benefits of ODSP include:

- Monthly financial assistance,
- An Ontario Drug Benefits Card, which covers medications listed in the Ontario Drug Benefits formulary,
- Basic dental care,
- Vision care and hearing aids,
- Back-to-school and winter clothing allowance for dependent children, and

- Community Start-Up benefits for those facing eviction, leaving an institution or setting up their home (normally available once in a 24-month period).

ODSP support may continue while attending university or community college. However, the allowable amount a person can apply for through the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) will be reduced to cover only direct school costs such as tuition, books, etc.

What is the ODSP Employment Support Program?

This is a program that assists people with a wide range of disabilities to prepare for, find and keep employment. To be eligible for Employment Support:

- You must have a physical or mental disability that is expected to last for one year or more, and which makes it difficult for you to find or keep a job.
- You must be willing and able to work.
- You may also qualify if you are currently working but are having difficulty keeping your job because of your disability.
- You do not have to be receiving ODSP Income Support to qualify for Employment Support.

Contact the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario

We are here to help. The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario (SSO) is a family-based organization that understands what it's like to live with schizophrenia. We define family as caring relationships between people with schizophrenia, their relatives, friends, and other individuals in a supportive capacity. Our objectives are to:

- support, educate, engage, and empower families,
- promote community awareness,
- advocate on behalf of families affected by schizophrenia,
- work cooperatively with organizations for allied disorders,
- support and advocate for relevant research, and
- promote early intervention.

This document provides a general overview of ODSP Income and Employment Supports, and is current as of the time of printing. For more detailed information, please visit www.archlegalclinic.ca or the Ministry of Community and Social Services website www.cfcs.gov.on.ca. You can also visit Persons with Disabilities Online www.pwd-online.ca for more helpful information on disability-related programs and services.

The SSO has chapters and regional offices across the province to serve you. Please check our website at www.schizophrenia.on.ca to find the one closest to your community. The more we work together, the more powerful our voice becomes on issues affecting people living with schizophrenia. Help us continue to speak for families by joining the society today.

This information should not be used as a substitute for the advice of a professional. Consult a physician or a lawyer to discuss your individual facts and circumstances.