

Q: Who is eligible to receive the new disability program benefits?

A: Phase One of implementation scheduled for October 2009 will be targeted at existing clients with long-standing and well-documented disabilities. In the long term, the program will be for people with significant and enduring disabilities and little or no income. The significant and enduring nature of their disability will be based on an impact based assessment that will be done to determine their eligibility. Further details have not been developed.

Q: Who will qualify in Phase One? How will this determination be made?

A: Approximately 3,000 clients will be involved in Phase One. These individuals will be those social assistance clients with long-standing and well-documented disabilities. Further details are still being developed, however, we expect many will be those who live in residential care arrangements.

Q: Why are you making up to 7,000 people with disabilities wait until subsequent phases of the program?

A: Further work will be done to define criteria to assess a significant and enduring disability.

The Minister has asked the Community Advisory Committee to develop criteria to determine eligibility for the new program. The Community Advisory Committee will assist the Ministry in the development and selection of a disability assessment tool. This tool will be used to determine the impact of disabilities for remaining individuals and their potential enrollment in the new program.

Q: Are seniors eligible for the new program?

A: The October 2009 phase of implementation will be targeted at existing social assistance clients with long-standing and well-documented disabilities. Full program eligibility details have not yet been developed.

Q: Are people living on reserve eligible for the program?

A: No, the new program will not be available to on-reserve residents. The Federal Government is responsible for providing basic income support for people living on-reserve.

Q: When and how do people apply for the program?

A: For the first phase of implementation in October 2009, there will be no need to apply. Individuals meeting the first phase criteria will be identified and contacted by the Ministry later this summer. The exact details around this have not yet been developed.

Q: How much are benefits under the new program?

A: When implemented in October 2009, the benefits and amounts will be the same as those currently provided through the Saskatchewan Assistance Program. Overtime, we will work to develop a new benefit structure.

Q: Why are you implementing the program with the same benefits as SAP?

A: This program is going to take a number of years to implement fully and individuals will be transferred into the new program in phases. In order to ensure equity and fairness, no significant changes to benefits will be considered until all intended clients have been moved into the new program. The timing of these phases is not yet known.

Initially, clients will benefit from a new totally separate program with a different name and identity. The staff they deal with will be specially trained to deliver services to people with disabilities through this program. Clients will notice differences in how their cheque looks, there will be less need for monthly financial reporting and they will not need to reestablish the existence of their disability every year.

Q: What health benefits are provided?

A: People receiving benefits through the new program will continue to receive Supplementary Health Benefits.

Q: What kinds of services will be provided in this new program?

A: Details on the new program have not yet been developed. In the early phase of the new program, we would expect minimal changes to services provided by staff.

Q: Can people still get the Rental Housing Supplement if I get benefits from the new program?

A: Yes, you can still receive other benefits from all other Ministry programs that are available to people with disabilities.

Q: Can people still receive CPP or other disability income benefits and be eligible for the new program?

A: Yes, you can still receive benefits from other programs such as CPP. However, when the new program is implemented in October 2009, these benefits will still be considered income and be included when calculating the amount of your benefits.

Q: Can people still work or seek work if they are receiving benefits from the new program?

A: Yes, you can still work and you may receive benefits from the new program. However, earnings over a certain amount will impact the amount of benefit received.

Q: Will clients still have to report income and expenses to get benefits?

A: Yes, at the beginning you will still need to report your income and expenses, however, changes will be implemented to reduce routine reporting requirements. The exact details have not yet been determined.

Q: How will the new program be less intrusive?

A: The program will be designed specifically for those with significant and enduring disabilities. In recognition the circumstances of this client group change less frequently, the program will require fewer reporting requirements and clients will not have to re-verify their disability status once enrolled in the program.

Q: Where can I get more information?

A: There are a number of ways that you can get information about the new program. General information including recommendations by the Task Team is available on the Ministry website at: www.socialservices.gov.sk.ca.

Social assistance clients and their caregivers may contact the client's Income Assistance or CLD worker or any Social Services office.

Q: How will participation be determined for the Community Advisory Committee?

A: Details on membership has not been finalized.

Q: What is the role of the Community Advisory Committee?

A: The new community advisory committee is being created to continue the successful collaborative approach between government and disability stakeholders. The committee will work with the Ministry to select a new assessment tool to determine who is eligible for the new program, and to ensure that the new process is fair, effective, and fully considers the impact on the individuals enrolling in the program.

The committee will also support the Ministry in its work on other details regarding the new program including a new name, reduced reporting requirements, revised benefit structure, staff training, and new service delivery approaches.

Q: What is the name of the new disability income support program?

A: No formal name has been determined yet.

Q: Will clients get a new worker?

A: Program details, including service delivery approaches and staffing models have not yet been determined. A priority will be placed on ensuring the changes create as little disruption to clients as possible.

Q: Who will deliver the program when implemented in October 2009?

A: Ministry staff will deliver the new disability program.

Q: What kind of training will be provided to prepare staff to deliver the new program and when will it be provided?

A: A training plan will be developed that will cover new processes to administer the program, disability specific training and client service training. The Ministry will be working with the disability community to ensure the training supports the needs of the people we serve and is based on best practices.

Q: How will the program be delivered? In the regions or through the Contact Centre?

A: For the first phase, we would expect limited changes from today's model where current long term cases are supported through either the Benefit Administration Services office in Saskatoon or through regional staff.

Over time, additional service delivery approaches will be implemented so that clients have choice as to how to interact with the Ministry. We anticipate that services will be delivered both in person and through other modes.