



Family Alliance Ontario

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Christine Hughes
Manager, Policy Development and Coordination Unit
Community and Developmental Services Branch
Ministry of Community and Social Services

Dear Christine,

Our apologies for taking so long to reply to your email.

In the interests of providing equitable and fair access to supports for all people with developmental disabilities in Ontario, we reached out to a number of agencies to request input on items they include when budgeting for residential supports. We have received little response except from Karen Meehan of Toronto Region who shared with us budget sheets for global categories of expenditures. These categories were so broad we cannot believe funding would be distributed to agencies based on this lack of detail and information. However, with no information available to us, we are left wondering how agencies do account for the residential supports they provide.

Family Alliance Ontario strongly believes that the issue of direct funding for residential supports is a critical component of a fair and equitable, transformed system. In our various discussions with policy staff, we have learned that the reason direct funding for residential supports is not permitted is the expectation that ODSP covers this portion of a person's life. As a result, the regulation has been written to cover only direct services and supports and exclude residential infrastructure, except through agencies.

This is clearly unfair and reinforces the two-tier system that has victimized thousands of people with developmental disabilities not served by the agency-controlled system.

Individuals living in group homes or similar agency-supported settings do not have to be concerned whether their ODSP income actually covers the cost of their residential supports. They are assured a reasonable standard of living, with no threat of eviction, in clean, well-maintained, accessible environments with safety and security, adequate food, lift systems, furniture etc. Most of these "homes" are exempt from property taxes, or receive other rebates not available to those living "outside" the system.

We are hard-pressed to believe that the full cost of these living arrangements is borne **only** by client ODSP dollars. In fact, this is almost impossible in budgetary terms if all costs are taken into account. However, the draft regulation expects people with developmental disabilities living outside agency controlled settings to have their entire residential infrastructure and living costs supported by a portion of their ODSP income! ODSP may be a disability related program, but it was certainly not designed for people with developmental disabilities who require 24/7 support.

We believe a strong case can be made to include direct funding for 'home-living supports' to people living outside agency settings. Items that should be taken into account for this class of services and supports include:

- Enhanced rent - in order to live in safe, accessible surroundings-particularly an issue in major cities.
- Security and/or crisis alert systems - to ensure the safety of people living independently
- Insurance - both insurance of personal belongings and liability insurance
- Specialized equipment not covered by ADP - bath chairs, ceiling track lifts, doorway ramps, lifts (these would be set-up expenses)
- Maintenance services - cleaning, snow clearance, garden care (if appropriate)
- Repair/Replacement allowance
- Air conditioning/heating allowances - both set-up and ongoing, especially as people who need controlled temperature environments are currently hard-hit by new Time-Of-Use hydro charges
- Telephone/cable service

There are probably several more items which we could add to the list of things commonly available to people in agency settings for which there are no funding mechanisms for those living independently. We believe the regulations must be changed to address this inequity and provide a level playing field for all.

In answer to your other question regarding omissions from two of the existing classes: activities of daily living, and community participation supports. For the first, tasks related to recruiting, training and coordinating support staff should be added to the direct support costs provided to an individual; for the second, this category should include transportation costs (factoring personnel fares as well), enrolment and membership fees for relevant activities.

Sincerely

Barbara McCormack and Christy Barber
Family Alliance Ontario