Developmental
SERVICES

Policy Directives for Service Agencies Regarding the Host Family Program

Under the Authority of the
Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008

Effective April 1, 2016

Ontario

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Introduction

The Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) provides funding for services and supports to help adults with a developmental disability live as independently as possible in the community and to support their full inclusion in all aspects of society. Services and supports are based on the overarching principle that people who have a developmental disability are members of the community and, as such, their independence, dignity and self-determination should be respected and fostered.

Program Description

The Host Family Program is one option within a range of MCSS-funded residential service models for adults with developmental disabilities. The setting of a Host Family placement is located in a private family home. Care, support, and supervision are provided to the individual by identified caregivers from the Host Family.

The key goals of the Host Family Program are:

- To provide a safe and secure place to live in a family home setting;
- To promote a high quality of life; and
- To support community involvement, social inclusion, individual choice, independence and rights.

This program provides the opportunity for an individual to live and grow in a nurturing family environment. The Host Family Program is embedded in the belief in a community that respects the dignity and inherent value of each of its members and supports its members to participate, contribute, and lead enriched and meaningful lives.

Some of the outcomes achieved by this program are:

- Adults with developmental disabilities have a safe, secure and inclusive home;
- Families providing support are making a positive difference in the life of another person; and
- Both parties develop a long-term relationship with someone they might not otherwise have met.

Funding for this program is provided to community service agencies, which are independent non-profit organizations with their own board of directors, to provide a range of services and supports to adults with a developmental disability.

Policy Directives

According to the *Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008 (SIPDDA)*, the Ministry may develop policy directives and rules for service agencies that are enforceable by law. These policy directives provide minimum standards agencies must meet in the administration of this program.

Host Family service agencies are often already meeting many of these requirements and in fact going beyond the outlined expectations with exceptional best practices and tools and they achieve excellent outcomes for adults in their program and the families that support them.

All MCSS funded service agencies that provide services to adults with developmental disabilities are required to comply with the requirements set out in their service contract with the ministry, as well as all applicable legislation including SIPDDA, its regulations, and policy directives. This means that agencies must:

- Provide services in accordance with the terms and conditions of their service contract, including complying with all applicable laws;
- Comply with the regulation on quality assurance measures (Ontario Regulation 299/10), made under SIPDDA. The regulation sets rules for service agencies and covers a variety of topics associated with supporting adults with a developmental disability, including:
  - promotion of social inclusion, individual choice, independence and rights health promotion, medical services and medication;
  - abuse prevention and reporting;
  - safety and security of adults with a developmental disability;
- Comply with the Policy Directives for Service Agencies.

Under the regulation on quality assurance measures, the following provisions apply to service agencies who deliver the Host Family Program:

- Agencies are required to work with the Host Family and the individual to develop an individual support plan for the individual, in accordance with “Development of individual support plans” section;
- Agencies are required to provide abuse awareness education/training to the individual, in accordance with the “Policies and procedures on abuse prevention and reporting” section and specifically clause 8(2)(c); and
- Agencies are required to keep and maintain service records in accordance with “Service records” section.

The Policy Directives for the Host Family Program apply to agencies funded under SIPDDA who provide the Host Family Program and replace the requirements for adult Host Family Programs in the Family Home Program Guidelines, 2004.

Eligibility for the Host Family Program

All adults with a developmental disability who wish to apply for the Host Family Program must contact their local Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) office to have their eligibility for services under SIPDDA confirmed and complete the application package for adult developmental services.[1] Following the assessment and prioritization process and where resources are available, the DSO will refer eligible individuals to local service agencies offering the Host Family Program.

[1] DSOs are known as "application entities" under SIPDDA. For further information and a list of DSO locations across the province, you may visit http://www.dsontario.ca/

Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions apply:

Agency Staff: employees of the service agency who may set up and supervise program and/or support arrangements, and complete other functions as outlined within the agency's service agreement with the Host Family provider(s).

Adult: Person who is at least 18 years old or older.

Caregiver Respite: services and supports that are provided to, or for the benefit of, a person with a developmental disability by a person other than the primary caregiver of the person with a developmental disability and that are provided for the purpose of providing a temporary relief to the primary caregiver.

Family Member: a parent, child, sibling, spouse, common-law partner, adoptive parent, adopted child, stepparent or stepchild.

Home Study: an assessment process including a series of required interviews and checks conducted to determine whether the potential Host Family and their home are suitable for the Host Family Program.

Host Family: a family, composed of one or more persons, in which an individual with a developmental disability who is not a family member is placed by a service agency with the

Host Family to reside and receive care, support and supervision, and for which the Host Family receives remuneration from the service agency.

Individual: an adult with a developmental disability who is eligible to receive services and supports under the *Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008 (SIPDDA)* and is planning to or is residing with a Host Family.

Individual Support Plan: a written document developed by a service agency which identifies specific strategies that are to be undertaken to help an individual with a developmental disability to achieve his or her goals, and the services and supports that are to be provided to the person.

Ministry: the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Placement: the arrangement made by a service agency for a person to be supported in a home for which remuneration is provided to the family providing the support.

Police Records Check: means a record of a person's involvement with the police obtained through a search of police data bases and shall include a vulnerable sector check.

Primary Caregiver: the main person who takes responsibility for the support and care of an adult with a developmental disability. The designation of primary caregiver may extend to the spouse/partner of a primary caregiver.

Service Agency: a corporation or other prescribed entity that provides services and supports to, or for the benefit of, persons with developmental disabilities and that has entered into a funding agreement with the Ministry under section 10 of SIPDDA with respect to those services and supports.

Service Agreement: an agreement, prepared by the service agency and entered into between the service agency and the Host Family, pertaining to the provision of services and supports for an individual with a developmental disability.

***Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008* (SIPDDA):** the legislation sets out rules for agencies and people that receive funding from the Ministry of Community and Social Services for adult developmental services.

Vulnerable Sector (VS) check: This process verifies whether an individual has a criminal record, as well as any record suspensions (formerly pardons) for sexual offences and local police records for information relevant to the VS check. The information that can be legally disclosed is provided to the applicant.

1.0 Minimum Requirements in Screening Process for Host Families

Applicable to: service agencies that receive funding under SIPDDA from the Ministry of Community and Social Services to administer the Host Family Program.

Legislative Authority for Policy Directive: Section 7(1) 1

Effective Date: April 1, 2016

Purpose

The purpose of this policy directive is to outline the minimum standards that service agencies must meet in their screening process to identify potential host families to participate in the program and when reassessing existing host families.

Policy

Service agencies shall have and utilize written policies and procedures that outline the Host Family selection process including screening, and decision making criteria and processes that are used to match individuals with appropriate host families.

Directive

1. Considerations for Screening Criteria

Key considerations that service agencies must take into account when developing screening criteria for potential host families include, but are not limited to:

- The family's willingness and motivation to accept the individual as part of their family as well as willingness to foster and respect the individual's independence, dignity, self-determination, social inclusion and community participation;
- Physical, mental, social and emotional capabilities to meet the needs of the individual;
- Secure financial status with adequate income to provide for the needs of the household;
- Suitability of the Host Family setting for the individual based on factors such as, but not limited to, the individual's goals, interests, social connections, health and safety needs, and cultural/linguistic, religious background; physical attributes of the home and its surroundings; proximity to natural family members; and
- Availability and willingness of the Host Family to participate in orientation, training and ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities, as outlined in agency policies and procedures (which must accord with MCSS' Policy Directives) and the service agreement.

Host families cannot be a family member (as defined in the Definitions section of these policy directives) of the individual with a developmental disability. Host Families can be a person or families who are interested in and able to commit to a long-term Host Family arrangement with an adult with a developmental disability.

2. Cap on Number of Placements and Exemptions

Cap for New Host Family Placements[2]

There can be no more than two placements (i.e. persons placed - children and/or adults) in a Host Family's home. This includes children or adults who have been placed in the Host Family's home by an agency funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services or the Ministry of Community and Social Services. This, however, does not include short-term[3] caregiver respite placements.

Exemption and Extenuating Circumstances

In order to preserve existing family arrangements, families who foster children through a Children's Aid Society are exempt from the above-noted cap, in the following situation:

- Where the foster family has more than two foster children placed by a Children's Aid Society and
- Where one of those foster children has a developmental disability, and would continue to stay with the foster family as a Host Family Program placement after he/she turns 18 years of age.

Where this exemption applies, no additional placements for adults or children beyond those allowed by the above exemption are permitted.

In extenuating circumstances, as set out below, an agency may permit an exception to the cap on compassionate grounds where:

- There is a need to provide a temporary or interim placement on an urgent or emergency basis for an individual in the Host Family Program who cannot stay in his/her current placement; or
- There is common parentage (e.g., the sibling of an individual placed with the Host Family also seeks a Host Family placement), where the sibling was not part of the original placement.

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[2] The cap on the number of placements in/with a Host Family is effective on April 1, 2016. This cap is not meant to be retroactive. In situations where a Host Family arrangement included more than two individuals (children and/or adults) on April 1, 2016, the ministry does not expect that this arrangement would be altered to meet the cap. However, after this date if a person leaves the home this does not mean the home has a "vacancy" that can be filled. The cap applies to all future placements.

[3] Short-term caregiver respite is any respite placement less than four consecutive weeks per year.

The exemption and/or extenuating circumstances may only be considered if the key considerations listed above for screening host families are satisfied. The reasons for permitting any exceptions will be documented in writing and kept on file by the service agency. The agency will also notify the Ministry of the arrangements within 10 business days where an exemption or extenuating circumstances was approved by the agency.

3. Home Study

As a minimum performance standard, service agencies are required to conduct a home study of a potential Host Family, based on the following:

- Interviews with people living in the home conducted by staff from the service agency;
- Review of character references and police records checks, including current vulnerable sector checks (within the last six months) of all adults living on a full- or part-time[4] basis in the Host Family home; and
- Physical verification that the home and property meet the requirements of a safe living environment, as well as any applicable legislation and by-laws, including but not limited to: fire safety, health hazards, and water quality testing, if applicable.

Service agencies are required to prepare a written report on the findings of the home study to substantiate approval or lack of approval of a potential Host Family.

4. When to Re-Assess a Host Family

Agencies are required to re-assess a Host Family's suitability in any of the following circumstances:

- Any significant changes involving the Host Family, the individual, and/or their living situation (e.g. physical/mental illness, death of a family member, accident);
- When a new person is living in the home on a full-time or part-time basis;
- When the primary caregiver in the Host Family is unable to continue providing care to the individual;
- Where the service agency, individual or natural family has any significant concerns about the placement.

This is required so that impact on the individual supported can be assessed and appropriate actions taken as necessary.

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[4] Agencies will make a risk-based assessment of the impact a house guest will have on the individual and when they define the guest as a part-time resident. They should consider the living arrangements, regularity of visits, whether there will be unsupervised access and length of stay, as well as any other issues that may impact the individual's supports and safety.

2.0 Minimum Requirements to Include in a Service Agreement with the Host Family

Applicable to: service agencies that receive funding under SIPDDA from the Ministry of Community and Social Services to administer the Host Family Program.

Legislative Authority for Policy Directive: Section 7(1) 1

Effective Date: April 1, 2016

Purpose

The purpose of this policy directive is to set out minimum requirements that a service agency must include in its service agreement with a Host Family.

Policy

Prior to commencing a new placement, and for existing placements, the service agency must have a signed written agreement in place with the Host Family that includes certain minimum requirements regarding the provision of services to the individual with a developmental disability.

Directive

Service agencies shall have a signed service agreement with all Host Families for each placement[5] that addresses at a minimum the following:

- Host Family's participation in training and orientation, including pre-placement visits, CPR and first aid training, and training regarding abuse prevention and reporting policies;
- Host Family's agreement for the agency to conduct ongoing monitoring and physical safety reviews of the home and property of the placement, including home visits at least every 60 days with assessment of health and safety requirements, with at least an annual unannounced visit. This will help to ensure that performance standards continue to be met (e.g., that the Host Family is fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in supporting the individual; that the residence is a safe living environment);

[5] In situations where a Host Family has more than one placement, the service agency may have one agreement in place for each adult with a developmental disability, or a single agreement that covers all placements within the Host Family home.

- Requirement for the Host Family to report the following:
  - Any significant changes involving the Host Family, the individual, and/or their living situation (e.g. physical/mental illness, death of a family member, accident, information relating to any proposed placements in the home);
  - When a new adult or child is living in the home on a full-time or part-time basis;
  - When the primary caregiver in the Host Family is unable to continue providing care to the individual;
  - Any other significant concerns that could impact the individual;
- Roles and responsibilities of the Host Family including but not limited to:
  - Providing a comfortable and safe living environment;
  - Fostering the individual's independence, dignity, self-determination, social inclusion and community participation;
  - Assisting the individual with health care, basic needs, and other activities of daily living;
  - Providing nutritious meals, snacks and beverages;
  - Assisting the individual to attend school, social, and employment activities (if applicable), as well as encouraging other activities in the community;
  - Implementing components of the individual support plan according to the terms of the placement;
  - Maintaining financial and administrative records;
  - Participating in initial and ongoing training and reviews with the service agency at least annually; and
  - Maintaining regular communication with the service agency and providing updates (e.g. changes in the individual's behaviour or support needs, changes in family situation including any new proposed placement, serious accident or injury);
- Caregiver respite provided by the service agency where applicable;

- Host Family's agreement that they will only use agency-screened caregiver respite providers[6];
- Accessibility of agency staff to the individual, Host Family, and the individual's family as appropriate;
- Confirmation of insurance coverage carried by the Host Family, as may be applicable and appropriate (e.g., home insurance, liability insurance, vehicle insurance);
- Problem resolution and complaint processes to address situations where the individual or natural family raises a concern about the Host Family;
- Procedures associated with changing and/or ending the placement including that failure of the Host Family to comply with any stipulations may result in termination of the Host Family arrangement; and
- Means to address any potential conflicts of interest (e.g. if a member of the Host Family is a staff member or board member of a service agency, etc.).

[6] Adult members of the Host Family's extended family, or adult friends of the family, may provide caregiver respite so long as they have been screened by the agency and meet screening criteria (e.g., character references have been checked, results of a police records check, including vulnerable sector check, have been reviewed and are acceptable to the agency). Screens should be triggered based on the service agency's assessment of the risk associated with the Host Family arrangement.

3.0 Minimum Requirements for Ongoing Support and Oversight of Host Family Placements

Applicable to: service agencies that receive funding under SIPDDA from the Ministry of Community and Social Services to administer the Host Family program.

Legislative Authority for Policy Directive: Section 7(1) 1

Effective Date: April 1, 2016

Purpose

The purpose of this policy directive is to outline the minimum requirements for service agencies in their ongoing support and oversight of Host Family placements.

Policy

Service agencies shall have policies and procedures in place to support host families and monitor Host Family placements.

Directive

Service agencies administering the Host Family Program must have policies and procedures to address the following minimum standards:

1. Support

At a minimum, service agencies must:

- Provide training and orientation for the Host Family including, but not limited to: initial certification of CPR and first aid, confidentiality, abuse prevention and reporting, serious occurrence reporting (as may be applicable in the agency's policies and procedures), complaints, rights, and care, or ensure that the Host Family has completed equivalent training and orientation[7];
- Meet in person with the individual, who may be accompanied by a peer, friend or family member as may be appropriate and as may be requested by the individual, at least quarterly and separately from the Host Family, in order to receive feedback

[7] This training must be for the primary caregiver(s). Other members of the family may be trained as set out by the agency's policy and procedures. At least one of the primary caregivers is required to have certified CPR and first aid for all new placements after April 1, 2016. Recertification to be established by the agency after consideration of health and safety needs as outlined in Directive 1.

and address any issues the individual may have, in a personal and confidential manner;

- Provide ongoing support to the Host Family as needed (e.g., transition support, community information, connection to other host families for advice and support);
- Support caregiver respite with consideration for:
  - Any terms in the agency's service agreement such as making arrangements for planned and emergency caregiver respite where applicable,
  - When a screening should include a physical inspection of the respite provider's home, and
  - When a caregiver respite provider's initial screening should be triggered, for example overnight respite or paid respite or regularity of respite provision;
- Facilitate contact between the individual, their family/guardian and the Host Family, as appropriate;
- Work with the Host Family and the individual in the event of a change of circumstance where the Host Family provider is unable to continue in their role as primary caregiver; and
- Contact the Ministry about situations where an individual wants to move with their Host Family to another community outside the agency's service boundaries in Ontario. Considerations for such transfers may include an individual's or their substitute-decision maker's choice, access to and availability of, other community services and proximity to natural family.

2. Monitoring

At a minimum, service agencies must:

- Oversee and monitor the Host Family's compliance with their service agreement;
- Meet with the Host Family and the individual in person at least every 60 days (or more often as needed, at the agency's discretion), including at least one unannounced annual visit, with the purpose of ensuring that minimum performance standards continue to be met (e.g., that the Host Family is fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in supporting the individual; that the residence maintains a safe living environment);
- Have policies and procedures regarding monitoring the personal safety and security of individuals receiving supports and services under the Host Family Program that includes at a minimum:

- a physical verification of the residence and property to ensure the individual's living space is kept clean and safe;
- checking safety requirements related to fire safety, health hazards and water quality testing, where applicable, in the Host Family residence and involving other officials/professionals if required;

- Have policies and procedures in place to assist in the resolution of any concerns about the placement;
- Report serious occurrences to the ministry in accordance with Serious Occurrence Reporting Procedures;
- Have policies and procedures regarding when the Host Family must notify the service agency of any serious concerns such as those outlined in Serious Occurrence Reporting Procedures;
- Document and maintain written records of all monitoring visits/inspections of the Host Family home and meetings with both Host Family providers and individuals; and
- Provide copies of visit reports to the Host Family provider and the individual and/or the individual's family/legal guardian.

4.0 Remuneration to the Host Family

Applicable to: service agencies that receive funding under SIPDDA from the Ministry of Community and Social Services to administer the Host Family Program.

Legislative Authority for Policy Directive: Section 7(1) 1

Effective Date: April 1, 2016

Purpose

The purpose of this policy directive is to outline minimum requirements of the service agency in its remuneration to the Host Family and, in some cases, to individuals placed with the Host Family.

Policy

The service agency must have written policies and procedures to administer and manage funding for the Host Family placement. Depending on the arrangement in place, the agency may be responsible for providing a specific per diem amount to the Host Family and may also be involved in administering funds from an individual's income support program (e.g. Ontario Disability Support Program). In all cases, remuneration for supports and services must be provided directly to the Host Family from the service agency. The service agency will set remuneration rates.

Directive

As a minimum standard, the service agency's policies and procedures must address the following areas:

- The rates and processes for remuneration to the Host Family from the service agency, including an articulation of agency supports provided in addition to Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) funding;
- Processes to manage accommodation and basic needs expense payments (e.g. where the service agency is paying the Host Family on behalf of an individual); and
- Reimbursement of eligible expenses where appropriate (e.g. out-of-pocket expenses for the Host Family, travel to medical appointments, etc.).

Additional Resources

Websites

Family Home Program Provincial Coordinators Association
http://www.familyhomeontario.org/

Ministry of Community and Social Services
http://www.ontario.ca/community

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing – Ontario Building Code Information
http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page7393.aspx

Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services – Office of the Fire Marshal
http://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/FireMarshal/OFMLanding/OFM_main.html

E-Laws (access to provincial legislation and regulations)
http://www.ontario.ca/laws

Developmental Services Ontario
http://www.dsontario.ca

Documents

The Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008 (SIPDDA)
http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_08s14_e.htm

Regulation on Quality Assurance Measures (Regulation 299/10)
http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/regs/english/2010/elaws_src_regs_r10299_e.htm

Policy Directives for Service Agencies
http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/publications/developmentalServices/policy_directive_service/toc_service_directive.aspx

Serious Occurrence Reporting Procedures (Available from the Ministry of Community and Social Services)