

TITLE: INTAKE, ELIGIBILITY AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE – VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE	SECTION: ONTARIO WORKS
DATE: September 9, 2004	POLICY NO.: KDSB-OW-IV-25
APPROVED BY: Resolution No. 2004-75	REVISED:

REFERENCES:

Ontario Works Directive: 18.0-9
Ontario Works Directive 23.0 –10-11
Ontario Works Directive 24.0-8-9
Ontario Works Directive 29.0-6
Best Practice Checklist: Domestic Violence and Abuse
Walking On Eggshells: Abused Women’s Experiences of Ontario’s Welfare System

POLICY STATEMENT:

The Kenora District Services Board will provide a responsive, supportive Social Assistance program, genuinely respecting a person’s right to safety and a life free of violence. It must be a system that promotes democratic participation and seeks to ensure the inclusion of all members through understanding, compassion, respect and empathetic professional behavior by all Ontario Works staff.

PROCEDURE:

Intake

1. Offices should set up a protocol with the Shelters for expedited intake process when the applicant is in crisis or emergency situation.
2. Emergency verification interviews should be scheduled as top priority appointments.
3. Intake interviews should be completed in a private office for reasons of confidentiality and to provide a degree of support and understanding for the victim.
4. Caseworkers should visit the local shelter to complete application forms and facilitate the exchange of information if requested by the client.

Financial Supports

5. Offices should create a community network team to work with the shelter, the support staff and members of other agencies involved with the client (eg. Healthy Babies, Children’s Aid, Friendship centre).
6. Offices should provide financial assistance in situations where the applicant has no personal identification (eg. Birth certificate) as a result of fleeing a violent abusive situation.
7. Offices should have protocols for immediate issuance of emergency assistance including procedures to address urgent, crisis situations (e.g. food vouchers, taxi vouchers, motel vouchers).
8. Community Start-Up Benefits (CSUB) **must** be made available to all, eligible recipients to secure a new address, including moving costs, first and last month’s rent, utility and hydro deposits. Provision of CSUB is provided if the recipient will be establishing a permanent residence whether within or outside the geographic area. Workers must be satisfied that it is necessary for the health and welfare of the person to leave the previous place of residence.

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9. Offices should establish working relationships with local shelters to help ensure that all necessary forms and documents for application for CSUB are completed in a timely manner, clients will have CSUB cheque in hand when being discharged from the shelter.
10. The provision of special services, items or payments for health related purposes could include charges for a telephone for a victim of violence.
11. Offices should employ pay direct for CSUB to ensure third party services are secured (utility company, moving company, landlord).
12. Offices may provide the full amount of income assistance for the first three months of residency where an Applicant or participant enters a shelter, retains community accommodations and has financial commitments related to that accommodation.
13. Offices should supply information relating to the Emergency Energy Fund, Provincial Rent Bank Program for payment of energy, utility arrears, security deposits and reconnection fees.

Waivers & Deferrals

14. Offices should ensure that all victims of violence are informed of the three month participation deferral for victims of violence. Additional deferrals are granted on a case by case basis. Clients should also be informed that they can participate voluntarily if they wish.
15. Offices should practice effective case management practices to help determine whether deferral should be extended (eg. collaboration with other community partners to help make the determination).
16. Offices should make certain that efforts are made to ensure that verification is provided by police, counselors or other health care providers supporting the declaration of being a victim of family violence within three months .
17. Caseworkers should inform all victims of violence about the three month waiver from pursuing support, and the possibility of an extension to twelve months.

Community Supports

18. Offices should ensure that participation plans include the development of a safety plan as a first step through referral to a Shelter.
19. Offices should educate staff as to the availability of community resources and agencies and train caseworkers to refer victims to these community partners.
20. Offices should designate a specific worker as a community contact person. Their role would be as an advocate for victims of domestic violence and liaison with community agencies

Applicants Under 18

21. Special circumstances must exist for an applicant under age 18. Special circumstances can include physical, emotional or sexual abuse.
22. It may be determined that remaining in the parental home could further harm the physical, social or psychological development of the applicant
23. If the 16 or 17 year old applicant is also a sole support parent, the applicant is entitled to the same considerations as adults under the family violence policy (eg. Three month waiver of documentation to prove abuse, three month initial temporary waiver before pursuing jointly held financial assets or support).

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24. Parental contact is waived if the applicant exhibits signs during the application that he/she has been under some form of physical, emotional or sexual abuse including family violence or there is a recognized safety risk to the applicant.
25. Parental contact may be waived in cases where the Administrator has clear information confirming special circumstances (e.g. from a Children's Aid Society).

Sponsored Immigrants

26. Caseworkers should inform sponsored immigrants that they are not required to pursue support from his/her sponsor if there is a breakdown in the sponsorship by reason of family violence verified by a third party. Up to three months may be provided to obtain evidence of abuse.
27. If it is determined that there has been a breakdown in the undertaking by reason of family violence, sponsor support is determined to be \$0(i.e. the \$100 minimum income deduction does not apply).

Staff – Best Practices

28. Accurate information **must** be delivered in a comprehensive, user friendly manner, recognizing the client is in a state of crisis.
29. Offices should provide guest speakers/panel of experts/workshops on domestic violence.
30. Offices should consider joint training session with local shelters, housing agencies, CAS agencies and Violence Against Women agencies.
31. Offices should be equipped with resource manuals and other reference materials for staff to read.
32. Domestic violence and abuse, including child abuse and elder abuse, should be addressed as part of staff orientation/core training and staff should have refresher courses/workshops each year.
33. Offices should develop local protocols in partnership with other municipal departments and community agencies for providing services to people at risk of abuse.
34. Offices should develop internal protocols and guidelines to assist Ontario Works staff.
35. Ontario Works caseworkers should be trained in anti-oppression practices/approaches to their work and receive on-going training and supports in the work environment to implement the training.