

# Questions and Answers: Supported Employment for People with Disabilities

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## Phase One Launch of Supported Employment as part of the Provincial Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities

### GENERAL

**Q1. What is the new Supported Employment program and what types of services will it provide to people with disabilities?**

A1. The Supported Employment program is an evidence-based model that provides employment services to people with disabilities who want more intensive support services. This model is widely recognized as a best practice in the field. It will offer the flexibility and choice needed to meet a broad range of needs, including job readiness, job matching and long-term job retention services; and financial support for assistive devices, adaptive technologies, and other workplace accommodations.

**Q2. What will be the impact of the roll-out of the Supported Employment program on existing employment service providers?**

A2. The government is taking a measured and gradual phased approach to implementing Supported Employment and integrating employment services for people with disabilities.

The first phase of implementation is in three select communities: Belleville, Cornwall and Timmins.

The government is committed to ongoing consultations with key stakeholders throughout the phased implementation of the Supported Employment program. We will use feedback from service providers, the broader community, external stakeholder working groups, and individuals accessing the program to make improvements and/or adjustments, if needed, before future phases are rolled out.

The current existing employment services for people with disabilities that are in-scope for Phase 1 are:

- Ontario Employment Assistance Services (OEAS) under the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD)
- Ontario Disability Support Program Employment Supports (ODSP-ES) under the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS)
- Mental Health Vocational Employment Services (MHVES) under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC).

Phase 1 service providers will not lose funding during this period, and service providers outside of the Phase 1 communities will not be impacted. There will be no interruption of services in communities where Supported Employment is not being introduced.

For more details about this approach, see the below section (“Phased approach to implementing Supported Employment”).

**Q3. How will the Supported Employment program be evaluated? What will be the evaluation criteria?**

- A3. As per MAESD’s standard evaluation practices, the program would include monitoring and evaluation activities to assess relevance, reach, delivery, effectiveness, and efficiency.

The evaluation framework will include both quantitative and qualitative methods. Evaluation findings would be used to inform continuous improvement with respect to the design and ongoing program delivery and future implementation of the program across the province.

**Q4. Why doesn’t the government focus on identifying and sharing best practices in serving people with disabilities from existing, high-performing employment service agencies in Ontario?**

- A4. The Supported Employment program is designed to be flexible and complementary to current delivery best practices of existing, high-performing service providers.

The Supported Employment program is evidence-based and reflects promising practices in the field. To better help people with disabilities achieve their career goals, Ontario is finding ways to deliver programs with more consistent, simplified eligibility requirements; and provide services and financial supports that are complementary to each other. The intent is to raise all service providers to consistent standards of practice.

The Supported Employment program demonstrates a consistent, coordinated approach to providing employment services for people with disabilities. The program will offer individuals with seamless access to a wide range of employment supports that are

customized to their needs and are provided in close coordination with other health, human and social “wrap-around” supports.

**Q5: What engagement took place to inform the Supported Employment program?**

A5: The MAESD conducted extensive consultations on employment services for people with disabilities. Consultations to date have provided significant intelligence to inform the design of the program. This engagement has included:

- In 2015, targeted consultations were conducted on the design of the Supported Employment program. This included approximately 20 one-on-one key informant interviews and discussions at stakeholder tables and committees, such as the ODSP-ES service provider table and the Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities.
- In fall 2017, the external working group provided advice on the Provincial Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities and the proposed design aspects for the Supported Employment program. Officials from both MAESD and MCSS also conducted further one on one consultation with key members of the working group.
- Further engagement with the working group on the Supported Employment guidelines took place in late 2017.
- Extensive consultations with service delivery providers and stakeholders in Belleville, Cornwall and Timmins took place in spring 2017.

The MAESD is committed to ongoing consultations with key stakeholders throughout the phased implementation of the Supported Employment program.

## **PHASED APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**

**Q6: What is the phased approach you are using to implement this program?**

A6: The Supported Employment program will be rolled out in phases across Ontario, starting with what is referred to as Phase 1. The government is taking a measured and gradual phased approach to implementing Supported Employment and integrating employment services for people with disabilities. Communities will be gradually moving to the Supported Employment model, allowing the government to learn from this process and provide the best outcomes for people with disabilities in future phases.

The first phase of Supported Employment is offered in three communities across the province: Belleville, Cornwall and Timmins. This phase will use feedback from service providers and individuals accessing the program to inform improvements and/or adjustments, if needed, to inform future planning. Therefore, there is no pre-determined or assumed timeline for future phases.

**Q7: How were Phase 1 communities chosen?**

- A7: The government selected the proposed communities for Phase 1 following regional analysis that considered a number of factors, including:
- Regions with a high concentration of employment services for people with disabilities were excluded, to ensure minimal disruptions.
  - Service providers in these communities have been meeting their service commitments.
  - All existing service providers in the community have the capacity and capability to meet the program's implementation timelines.

**Q8: Will any service providers in the Phase 1 communities lose funding?**

A8: Phase 1 will not result in loss of funding.

**Q9: Will services for people with disabilities in the Phase 1 communities be disrupted?**

A9: No, services will not be disrupted. Client referrals to the new model will be carefully planned and sequenced to ensure a continuum of services to meet the range of needs of people with disabilities and to minimize disruption to services at the community level.

Ontario will work to ensure individuals currently in one of the three existing employment programs for people with disabilities continue to receive the services they need during the transition from existing employment services to the new Supported Employment model.

The government will work closely with service providers to create seamless transition processes and referral pathways to ensure all individuals with disabilities seeking employment services are connected to the appropriate services (this includes those individuals currently working with service providers under one of the three existing employment programs for people with disabilities).

**Q10: Will the network of services providers have appropriate linkages for referrals to health and community services?**

A10: All Supported Employment service providers are experienced employment service providers with strong linkages to local health and community services. Supported Employment service providers are encouraged to develop strong partnerships with other community or social service agencies serving people with disabilities. Evaluation of Supported Employment service providers includes consideration of how satisfied participants are with service coordination, including referrals to health and community services.

**Q11: Does the ministry and/or the Employment Ontario network have the specialized knowledge to deliver effective employment services for people with disabilities?**

A11: The Supported Employment model is based on evidence and promising practices within the field.

The government held targeted consultations with key stakeholders and experts on the program design and implementation plan. As we roll out the program in three communities for Phase 1, we have carefully engaged with a wide range of agencies in those communities to ensure coordination of services, and a robust performance management framework.

Ongoing evaluation and engagement with these providers will inform any future changes to the model.

**Q12: When will the new program be available?**

**A12:** Phase 1 client intake will begin on April 1, 2018.