**OW and ODSP Emergency Benefit**

The Ministry has announced that it is extending the discretionary COVID-19 Emergency Benefit under both OW and ODSP for three more months –May, June, and July.

There have been some significant changes to the policies around this benefit.

It is now a monthly benefit (no longer one-time) and a flat monthly rate for all eligible benefit units ($100 for singles and $200 for families). The ODSP memorandum says the flat rate “will be provided”; the OW memorandum says “may be issued”.

It will not be available to benefit units in receipt of CERB except in cases where CERB is being treated as fully exempt (where received by youth under 18, adults in full-time secondary school, and full-time post-secondary students).

Recipients who received an initial Emergency Benefit in March or April and who still qualify will automatically receive the extended benefit in May, June, and July.

People who did not receive an initial Emergency Benefit in March or April will have to request it and outline their COVID-19 related needs. It “should not be issued proactively” to all benefit units.

A centralized team has been set up to support local offices in issuing the benefit for ODSP cases with a dedicated email address: ODSP.EmergencyBenefit@ontario.ca.

While OW Administrators continue to have the discretion to provide discretionary benefits to both OW and ODSP recipients, the Ministry is requesting that ODSP caseworkers refer only clients with “urgent health and safety needs” to OW at this time.

Verification of costs will not be required but caseworkers should “use their discretion to confirm that clients are facing extraordinary expenses” and record the type of expenses in question. Examples provided in the policy memoranda include:

* Personal Protective Equipment required for hospital or clinic visits, e.g. for dialysis, doctors’ appointments for an ongoing health-related issue.
* Cleaning supplies for those who have a family member diagnosed with COVID-19.
Delivery costs for food, medical supplies, or other essential supplies for recipients or families who are self-isolated or quarantined.
* Travel costs (e.g., taxi) to pick up food staples, medical supplies, or other essential supplies for recipients who are avoiding public transit.