

## HASTINGS COUNTY INCOME SUPPORT ONTARIO WORKS

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| <b>Intake Access Center</b>  | <b>Phone: 613-771-9630/866-414-0300</b>                             |
| <b>Ontario Works Belleville</b><br>228 Church Street<br>Belleville, ON | <b>Phone: 613-966-8032/800-267-0575</b><br><b>Fax: 613-966-4598</b> |
| <b>Ontario Works Trenton</b><br>91 Creswell Ave<br>Trenton, ON         | <b>Phone: 613-392-1387</b><br><b>Fax: 613-392-2876</b>              |
| <b>Ontario Works Madoc</b><br>56 Russell Street<br>Madoc, ON           | <b>Phone: 613-473-5258/866-434-4024</b><br><b>Fax: 613-473-1027</b> |
| <b>Ontario Works Bancroft</b><br>27578 Hwy 62 South<br>Bancroft, ON    | <b>Phone: 613-332-3410/866-569-1941</b>                             |
| <b>Email:</b> burked@hastingscounty.com<br>burtw@hastingscounty.com    | <b>Website:</b> www.hastingscounty.com                              |

**Hours of Operation: Monday to Friday 8:30 – 4:30**

### Introduction

Hastings County Social Services/Ontario Works administers social assistance programs and services for residents of Hastings County, including but not limited to income support, temporary help to individuals in urgent need, and employment support. Ontario Works is mandated to provide temporary financial assistance to people in financial need and to aid them in finding the shortest route to employment. Applicants and participants may also qualify for emergency and discretionary items depending on circumstances.

Social Services/Ontario Works has a stated commitment to providing fair and consistent response to women within Hastings County who are attempting to leave, or are currently in an abusive situation. Personnel are committed to creating a welcoming environment for clients; they will not show any bias or preference in relation to clients and will excuse themselves from any service relationship where there is a real or perceived conflict of interest as identified by the staff person or client. A goal of service is to provide options while supporting choices.

Caseworker and supervisors maintain strict confidentiality; they will not disclose any information about clients unless required to do so by law or with written permission from involved parties.

More specifically, Social Services/Ontario Works will:

- provide emergency financial assistance and temporary financial support to eligible persons in need;
- provide emotional support, information, and referrals to appropriate crisis services and community-based agencies ;
- assist clients in their efforts to learn about various options available in relation to employment, support, temporary shelter, long term housing, etc.; and
- liaise with other agencies on behalf of clients as needed.

## **Overview of Specific Procedures and Services**

### **1. WHEN VICTIMS OF PARTNER ABUSE APPLY FOR ASSISTANCE**

All individual who wish to apply for Ontario Works financial assistance are asked to contact the Intake Access Centre (IAC) unless they are unable to do so. If a woman in a crisis situation makes direct contact with a local office in person or over the phone, the applicant is to be serviced by the local office. The woman would only be referred to the IAC for Service Delivery Model Technology (SDMT) data capture if there is no immediate crisis or need. If the applicant declares when speaking to IAC staff that she is a victim of violence she will be asked specific questions in order to establish her immediate safety. A corresponding “warm transfer” will be conducted on every case and the applicant will speak with office staff to ensure local resources are provided and to establish a rapport. If unsafe or uncomfortable, an SDMT application will not be completed over the phone. If necessary, intervention by emergency services may be initiated in emergency situations.

The goal is to ensure that the immediate needs of the woman are satisfied without delay. Applicants declaring abuse who contact front counter staff or switchboard staff in order to find out how to apply for assistance will be seen by a local office Caseworker and/or Supervisor immediately.

If a woman identifies herself to the Ontario Works office as an abused woman, and she appears to be at high risk, the local office will address immediate need and ensure an application is completed in the same business day.

### **Emergency Assistance**

On occasions where an applicant has a source of income that would preclude entitlement for Ontario Works Financial Assistance but may not have enough available resources to finance leaving the abusive situation they may receive emergency financial assistance.

In those instances when the request for emergency assistance is approved, the woman may be granted up to two weeks assistance and any or all of the following: Community start up, Discretionary and/or Mandatory Benefits (for a crib, bed and/or approved medical items) and a Drug Benefit Card. Emergency Assistance and benefits related to relocation costs may be available to the applicant who has not yet left the abuser’s

address, providing she has demonstrated plans to move and has verification of the new address (irregardless of the status of joint assets/income or those of the abuser).

### **Continuing Financial Assistance**

When a woman indicates that she needs ongoing financial assistance, she must go through the regular financial eligibility determination for all applicants; however, victims of partner abuse may be:

- granted a temporary deferral on the participation agreement re: seeking employment, up to a maximum of three (3) months unless otherwise authorized by an Ontario Works Supervisor, and/or
- granted a temporary waiver from pursuing support from her ex-partner up to a maximum of three (3) months unless otherwise authorized by a Supervisor
- waived the verification of bank and/or asset information for up to three months if pursuing this information would place her at further risk.

## **2. WHEN CLIENTS DISCLOSE ABUSE**

When a client of Social Services/Ontario Works discloses that she is currently experiencing violence in her intimate relationship, the Caseworker will offer emotional support, information, and referrals to suitable community agencies, such as Three Oaks Foundation and Victims Services.

### **Women Temporarily Residing in Women's Shelters**

Women temporarily residing in women's shelters are eligible to receive full basic allowance and full shelter benefits for the first three months they are living in the shelter in order to maintain the community residence from which they have fled. The full basic allowance and shelter benefit may also be issued, upon review, for an additional period if necessary to continue to maintain their residence.

Women who are temporarily residing in a woman shelter and are not maintaining their community accommodation will be provided with \$116 for each member of the benefit unit in the shelter (Personal Needs Allowance or "PNA").

Social Services/Ontario Works personnel recognize that the amount and type of assistance available through Ontario Works may not be sufficient to meet the needs of abused women who are either living in a shelter or who are trying to build a violence-free life for themselves and their child/ren. For example, when a woman leaves Three Oaks Foundation to set up her independent home, she may require first and last month's rent or she may need monies to purchase a refrigerator or stove. The Caseworkers and Supervisors will make every effort to provide the woman with referrals and information about other options for donations or support that will not compromise her eligibility for assistance.

**When moving from a shelter to a permanent residence**, the client may be eligible for the Community Start Up Maintenance Benefit to assist with her transition to a violence-free home.

### **Children at Risk**

In response to reports of woman abuse where the woman is a mother of one or more children under the age of 16, the Children's Aid Society may become involved to assess if any child has been physically or emotionally harmed, or is at substantial risk of physical or emotional harm as per the Child and Family Services Act. Caseworkers/intake screeners are encouraged to consult with their supervisor in each case. The CAS may be contacted directly to discuss feasibility of a referral based on the circumstances presented.

If a woman is fearful that their abuser may try and take her child/ren she will be given the phone number for the Lawyer Referral Crisis Line 1-800-268-8326. There is no charge associated with this line. The woman should advise the operator that they are in a partner abuse situation and they will be dealt with immediately.

### **3. DOCUMENTATION**

When a Woman discloses violence and abuse, either during their initial interview or at any time during their involvement with Social Services/Ontario Works special documentary and communication procedures are implemented by the caseworker to promote her safety. The Restricted Access Flag is utilized in SDMT, as well as unique phone numbers and notes in the scheduling tool to alert staff that a member of the benefit unit is a victim of family violence.

All clients of Ontario Works are required to inform their Case Manager of any change of information, such as change of address and/or change in financial situation.

### **Accessibility**

Applicants fleeing abuse that require assistance can contact the Intake Access Center or any local office by phone. Arrangements can be made to meet with applicants in any office or off-site at a safe location (e.g. local police station) if necessary. If required, arrangements can also be made to transport abused women via taxi to any local office. It should also be noted that emergency assistance can be granted over the phone in extreme cases.

Hastings County Ontario Works offers unilingual services; however arrangements will be made if an interpreter is required. In addition, every effort will be made to utilize appropriate staff that may be available.

## Accountability

Representative from Hastings County Social Services participates on the QCCAV. Complaints or concerns about the quality or nature of services received or not received through Social Services/Ontario Works can be directed to any Ontario Works Supervisor or Manager. Any such complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the *Ontario Works Act* and the policies and procedures of Hastings County Social Services. Individuals who not satisfied with the outcomes of requests for funding may ask for an internal appeal of the decision. If they remain unsatisfied with the decision of the internal appeal they may present their case to the social benefits tribunal.