

Temporary Targeted Wage Enhancement

MCCSS-funded Children's Direct Funding Programs

Stakeholder Questions and Answers

General Information:

The Government of Ontario is providing a temporary wage enhancement for direct support workers who care for vulnerable people of all ages, including children and youth, in residential, community and home settings.

If families employ or buy services from a worker(s) to care for their children or youth with special needs using funding from one or more of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS)-funded children's direct funding programs, these worker(s) may be eligible for a temporary wage enhancement. This document provides information to help you answer questions from families about the temporary wage enhancement for direct support workers.

1. Who is eligible?

Eligible workers provide support with daily living tasks and personal care (such as feeding, changing) and ensuring the safety and welfare of children and youth with special needs. This includes workers who provide respite services. This care may be provided in-person, or virtually/online (for example, where a support worker engages in activities with the child online to provide the caregiver with respite).

To be eligible, the worker must be doing some or all of the following in their work with a child or youth with special needs:

- providing personal care (such as feeding, dressing, personal hygiene, toileting, managing medication),
- providing necessary supports required to access and participate in community activities, and/or
- observing, planning daily living routines, supervising and monitoring safety risks.

Regulated health professionals, such as nurses, are not eligible for this wage enhancement.

Wage enhancements will not be provided for any time not engaged in work, including:

- Vacation
- Any authorized paid leave, including sick leave
- Time and benefits awarded under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997

A worker may be eligible for the wage enhancement if a family pays for them to provide the services described above using funding from one or more of the ministry's direct funding children's programs:

- Special Services at Home (SSAH)
- Enhanced Respite for Medically Fragile and/or Technologically Dependent Children (Enhanced Respite)
- Ontario Autism Program (OAP) Childhood Budget or Interim One-time Funding
- Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD)

2. How can families apply for the wage enhancement?

Families can complete and submit an online application at the following link:

<https://www.app.grants.gov.on.ca/psw>

Families can apply for funding from the ministry to pay eligible worker(s) \$3 per hour on top of their existing hourly wages, for all hours worked within the eligibility period: between October 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021.

Families can request funding for eligible workers that worked (or will work) any time during the eligibility period. Wage enhancement payments are retroactive to October 1, 2020.

3. What is the deadline to apply?

Families can apply for the wage enhancement funding beginning on January 14, 2020. **All applications must be received by the ministry before March 22, 2021.** Families can claim projected expenses up to March 31, 2021.

4. What information do families need to submit in their application?

The information families submit will help the ministry confirm that the family is receiving funding from one or more of the ministry's children's direct funding programs and using it to pay an eligible worker(s) based on the job functions listed above. To determine how much funding families will receive, they will be asked to submit information about the number of hours the worker(s) worked or is scheduled to work, by month, during the eligibility period.

Families should gather the following information before they begin the application:

1. Their **child's authorization number** (could also be called the registration or reference number or member ID) for one of the direct funding children's programs the family receives funding from (this number can be found on the letter they received from the ministry at the beginning of the year confirming their registration and/or continued receipt of the program, or on their monthly ACSD statements). A family may submit claims for more than one child within one

application, if they have more than one child receiving funding from the ministry's direct funding children's programs.

2. The **total number of hours worked** (or scheduled to work) by month (e.g. total number of hours worked in October) and **total number of days worked** during the eligibility period (October 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021) for all potentially eligible worker the family employs
3. Their **banking information** to set up direct deposit (e.g. from a blank cheque)

If they make a mistake in the application or need to change the information they have submitted, beginning in February 2021, families can add information to existing applications directly through the online application page even after the application has been submitted.

Families can submit one application with multiple claims. The ministry may request further information to confirm worker eligibility and number of hours worked in the eligible period.

At the end of the application form, families will be asked to attest that all the information they have submitted is true and accurate to the best of their knowledge.

5. What happens after families apply?

Once their application has been approved by the ministry, the family will receive a payment based on the total amount approved for each of the claims within the application. They can then use this funding to pay their worker(s).

Funding must be used to provide a \$3 per hour wage enhancement to the eligible workers for the hours claimed. Any funding not spent for this purpose must be returned to the ministry.

If the ministry requires additional information to process the application, ministry staff will contact the family.

For recipients of the OAP Childhood Budgets and Interim One-time Funding:

Families should not include the wage enhancement in the expense forms that they submit for Childhood Budgets and Interim One-time Funding, for the purposes of reconciliation.

For recipients of SSAH and/or Enhanced Respite:

Families will continue to submit invoices from their direct support workers to the ministry for reimbursement. The invoice(s) should include only the base amount they have (or would have) paid their worker(s) and not include the \$3 per hour wage enhancement.

If the wage enhancement is included in the claim amount, the invoice should clearly distinguish between the regular wages and the wage enhancement. Any overpayment may cause the ministry to reduce the amount of future SSAH/Enhanced Respite payments.

For recipients of ACSD:

Per normal process, families do not need to submit invoices for reimbursement to their regional office. They will receive funding for the wage enhancement based on claims made through this online application process, which is separate from the funding that families receive through the ACSD program.

Other Frequently Asked Questions:

6. Does the temporary wage enhancement apply to support workers in childcare settings, recreational programs and camps?

Yes. As long as the person is providing the functions of an eligible worker, staff of day care, recreational programs and camps are eligible to receive the wage enhancement.

If the worker is employed directly by the daycare, recreational or camp program, the employer will pay the wage enhancement. If the family is paying for their services with funding from SSAH, ACSD, Enhanced Respite or Ontario Autism Program Childhood Budget or Interim One-time Funding, the family may claim the wage enhancement through the online application process.

7. If a family employs a family member, friend and/or neighbor to provide care for their child and/or provide respite, are they eligible to receive the temporary wage enhancement?

Yes. As long as the person is providing the functions of an eligible worker and the family is paying for their services with funding from SSAH, ACSD, Enhanced Respite or Ontario Autism Program Childhood Budget or Interim One-time Funding, they may be eligible to receive the temporary wage increase.

Regardless of job title or formal qualifications and training, to be eligible work functions must involve providing support with daily living tasks and personal care and ensuring the safety and welfare of children and youth with special needs, including caregiver respite.

8. Can families complete a paper application?

The online application tool is a quick and simple way for families to submit an application for the temporary wage enhancement. It is easy to use and can be completed at any time. Applications submitted online can be processed faster than

paper applications submitted through the mail, which means families will receive their payments faster. Through the online application tool, if families need to update their information – for instance, to add additional support worker hours – they can update and resubmit the application as needed.

If the family requires a paper application, they can contact:

- For recipients of Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD), Special Services at Home (SSAH) and/or Enhanced Respite for Medically Fragile and/or Technologically Dependent Children (MFTDC), please contact your local regional office.
- For questions about the Ontario Autism Program (OAP) Childhood Budget or Interim One-time Funding, please contact the ministry's central resource team

Families can also contact mccss.tpcommunications@ontario.ca to request a paper application.

9. Can an agency assist families to complete the online application and receive the wage enhancement funding on the family's behalf?

If you are a Transfer Payment Recipient (TPR) currently receiving direct funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), you can submit an application for the wage enhancement through TPON via the agency portal <https://www.app.grants.gov.on.ca/gr/tpcr/#/externalLogin> on behalf of all families that you support through the four eligible direct funding programs (Special Services at Home (SSAH), Enhanced Respite for Medically Fragile and/or Technologically Dependent Children (MFTDC), Ontario Autism Program (OAP) Childhood Budgets and Interim One-time Funding and Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD)).

If you do not manage direct funding for clients or do not have a funding relationship with MCCSS, then you can assist the family to complete the online application and/or submit an application on behalf of the family through the direct funding TPON link <https://www.app.grants.gov.on.ca/psw>. The cheque will be sent to the family, and you must work with the family to remit payment of the wage enhancement to the eligible worker(s) as stated in the claim.

Should you also support clients through the Passport program, the process for receiving the wage enhancement is through the regular Passport submission process. It is not being managed through TPON.

10. What happens if a family receives more funding than they need to pay their worker(s) the wage enhancement?

When applying for the temporary wage enhancement, families should only claim hours that an eligible worker has worked or that they know a worker will work, so that they receive the right amount of funding. Funding for the wage enhancement cannot be spent on anything other than providing a temporary wage increase to eligible workers.

If, at the end of the eligibility period, families have not been able to spend the funding they have received due to unforeseen circumstances such as a cancelation, they should send a cheque payable to the Minister of Finance to their regular program contacts, indicating that they are reimbursing a wage enhancement overpayment.

11. After families submit their applications online, when will they receive the funding? Who do they contact if they don't receive a payment?

Applications will be processed, and payment issued, within three to four weeks from the date that the application is submitted. If the family has not received a payment within a month, they should contact mccss.tpcommunications@ontario.ca.

12. Can families update their banking information if they have already submitted the application?

If banking information is deemed incorrect, families will be notified via e-mail that a correction needs to be made. Families will be directed to the online portal and will be provided with specific instructions on how to make corrections to the banking information.

13. If a family has already submitted their invoices and received reimbursement (i.e. for SSAH and/or Enhanced Respite), do they need to submit another claim for the wage enhancement?

Yes, families may apply for the \$3 per hour wage enhancement through the online application, to top-up their worker's(s') wages for hours that they have worked between October 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021.

Families should not include the \$3 per hour wage enhancement in their invoices to the ministry's regional offices for reimbursement from SSAH and/or Enhanced Respite.

14. Will this funding affect families' annual budget/authorized funding (e.g. for SSAH, Enhanced Respite or OAP)?

No, the temporary wage enhancement will not affect families' annual budget or funding authorization. The \$3 per hour wage enhancement will be paid separately through this online application process and is time limited to March 31, 2021.

15. If a family has spent their funding (from one or more of the direct funding programs) on other eligible services and do not have claims related to support workers, are they still eligible to receive the \$3 per hour wage enhancement?

No, the family would not be eligible if they do not have claims related to eligible support workers. The wage enhancement funding is to support an increase of \$3 per hour to direct support workers.

16. If a family pays for direct support workers out of pocket, using their personal funds, are they eligible to receive the \$3 per hour wage enhancement?

No. The wage enhancement does not apply to payments made using private funding.

17. If a family receives the maximum ACSD funding for support worker services, are they still eligible for the \$3 per hour wage enhancement funding?

Yes. The wage enhancement funding is separate from families' regular ACSD funding.

18. Does the wage enhancement apply to families who are purchasing services directly with Complex Special Needs (CSN) funding?

The wage enhancement applies to in-scope CSN-funded direct support worker services. However, agencies that are contracted by the ministry to provide the CSN-funded services must apply for the wage enhancement funding through the TPR or OPR processes. For more information, please see <https://www.app.grants.gov.on.ca/gr/tpcr/#/externalLogin>

If families are receiving CSN funding to purchase services, then the case management agency will need to apply for temporary wage enhancement funding through TPON. Families cannot directly apply for the wage enhancement funding for their CSN funded services.