

Report SSR-SS-02-16

To: Chair Burley and Members of the Social Services Committee
From: Andrea Brendel, Ontario Works Manager
Meeting Date: February 25, 2016
Subject: To provide Committee members with information on the Healthy Smiles Ontario and the Ontario Electricity Support Programs
Status: Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution SSC25-16; Endorsed by County Council April 5, 2016 per Resolution CC44-16;

Recommendation(s)

That Report SSR-SS-02-16 regarding the Healthy Smiles and Ontario Electricity Support Program be received for information.

Background

The purpose of this report is to inform the members of the Social Services Committee of supportive programs available to their low income constituents. These programs are available to recipients of Ontario Works assistance as well as low income households throughout the Province.

Healthy Smiles Ontario

Prior to January 1, 2016, dependents of Ontario Works recipients were provided with mandatory dental coverage through the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS). As of January 1, 2016, children and youth aged 17 and under from low income families including those from Ontario Works, Temporary Care Assistance, Ontario Disability Support Program, and Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities will have dental coverage provided by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) through a program called Healthy Smiles Ontario.

A cheque insert was sent to Ontario Works recipients with regard to this change with the November assistance payments. The insert advised of the

coverage change and informed Ontario Works recipients that children already in receipt of Ontario Works will automatically be enrolled in the Healthy Smiles program.

Healthy Smiles Ontario is an income tested program which provides free dental services for check-ups, cleanings, fillings, x-rays, scaling, urgent and emergency dental care to low income children in Ontario. Comprehensive information about the application process is available at [Ontario - Healthy Smiles](#)

The Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) announced in 2015 the transfer of financial responsibility of Ontario Works dependents' dental costs to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care as of August 1, 2015. The Healthy Smiles Ontario program, however did not provide this coverage until January 2016. During the transition period of August 2015 to December 2015, MCSS has advised they will assume 100% of the costs of Ontario Works children's dental benefits. If Grey County is fully reimbursed for the cost of children's dental and the associated 5% administrative costs there will be an estimated net levy savings of \$4980.00 for 2015. Based on the 2015 expenses the estimated 2016 net levy savings will be \$9150.00 for Grey County.

Ontario Electricity Support Program

The Ontario Energy Board has a support program available for low-income households where eligible individuals will receive a credit on each electricity bill beginning in 2016. The amount of the credit will depend on the number of people residing in the home and the combined household income. The credit will range between \$30.00 and \$50.00 per month. Recipients of Ontario Works may access this program as well as low income households, however there is no automatic enrollment. A cheque insert was included with the February 2016 assistance payments to Ontario Works and Temporary Care Assistance recipients in Grey County. This insert advised of the program and provided a toll free number and website to access more detailed information and the online application.

www.ontarioelectricitysupport.ca

YMCA Owen Sound Grey-Bruce Housing Services is providing assistance throughout the Grey-Bruce area with the application process for this program. Although an online application is available, it is only applicable if the individuals in the household have filed income tax returns in the past two years. Assistance with the application from YMCA Housing Services is

available to those locally who have not filed their taxes as well as those finding the online application difficult. These supports are available from the YMCA at its Owen Sound and Hanover locations. To assist the YMCA in supporting applicants throughout the County, Grey County Social Services has offered space at our Markdale and Durham satellite offices for YMCA staff to meet with applicants.

Ontario Works recipients will not be negatively impacted from enrollment in this program in relation to their assistance. The after credit bill amount will be considered the household expense for electricity upon which the monthly budget will be calculated. There will be no income deduction for the credit amount for recipients of Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/Information Technology Considerations

Healthy Smiles Ontario

The net levy savings for 2015 and 2016 are estimates only. There has been no reimbursement received to date and clarification has not been provided by the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) if they will assume the children's dental administrative costs in addition to children's dental costs for August to December 2015. There has also been no confirmation that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) will cover the children's dental administration costs in addition to the dental costs. Estimates noted above were calculated with the assumption that both administrative and dental costs would no longer be the responsibility of the Municipality.

Ontario Electricity Support Program

There are no such considerations as this report is for informational purposes only.

Link to Strategic Goals/Priorities

Goal 6 - Achieving Excellence in Governance and Service

This report is intended to inform Council of supportive programs for their constituents. This awareness of available programs and services enables further development of excellence in service throughout the County of Grey.

Attachments

None

Respectfully submitted by,

Andrea Brendel
Ontario Works Manager

Director Sign Off: Barbara Fedy, Social Services Director