

SPECIAL DIET ALLOWANCE PROGRAM INFORMATION FOR HEALTH-CARE PROVIDERS

March 25, 2011

As you know, the Special Diet Allowance (SDA) program provides financial assistance for people with eligible health conditions who receive Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) or Ontario Works (OW) benefits to purchase special diets to help manage those conditions.

The provincial government has recently changed the SDA, with new regulations coming into effect April 1, 2011. These changes are explained below.

All SDA recipients are required to complete a new application form. Health-care providers approved to complete the new Special Diet Allowance application form are:

- a physician registered with the College of Physicians and Surgeons;
- a nurse practitioner or registered nurse in the extended class registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario; or
- a registered dietitian registered with the College of Dietitians of Ontario.

A midwife registered with the College of Midwives of Ontario or a traditional Aboriginal midwife recognized and accredited by her or his Aboriginal community are approved only to confirm the need for a special diet for the condition of insufficient lactation to sustain breastfeeding or if breastfeeding is contraindicated.

Your assistance to your clients / patients in completing this form is critical, as the income that this program provides can be a lifeline for people with eligible health conditions who live in deep poverty. Please take time to complete these forms accurately in order to best serve your clients/patients.

- 1) **Your client / patient does not have to send in the new application form right away.** Her / his existing SDA will continue until ODSP receives the new application form, or July 31, 2011, whichever comes first. The new application must, however, be received by ODSP **by July 31, 2011.**
- 2) Under the new regulations, the list of health conditions has been shortened significantly, and a few conditions have been added. In addition, the allowance amounts for some conditions have increased, while some have decreased.

To help you become familiar with the new list of conditions and the allowance amounts now attached to them, **we have attached the list on page 3.** Note that the total amount that anyone can receive under the new list is still \$250.

We recommend you **go through the new form and the list with your clients / patients to determine whether the allowance amount they receive will increase or decrease** under the new regulations.

If your client / patient decides not to submit the form right away, you may still complete and date the form and the individual can wait before submitting it to her / his caseworker. In any event, if your math is incorrect and the amount your client / patient will receive will actually increase, s/he will receive a back-payment to April 1.

- 3) The new forms require health providers to sign a new **declaration** and recipients to sign a **consent to release information**.

The consent only authorizes the release of information directly related to the health conditions checked off on the form. It is our understanding that this information will be used by the Ministry of Community and Social Services to look for patterns of unusual prescribing among health providers.

You should not be receiving calls from front line OW and ODSP caseworkers to discuss your clients' / patients' health conditions. If a specific application is queried by the Ministry, medical records may be reviewed by a clinical expert.

- 4) Effective February 1, 2011, a **stand-alone form for the Pregnancy and Breast-Feeding Nutritional Allowance (PBFNA)** comes into effect.

Prior to that, applying for the PBFNA was done on the SDA application form. The same health care providers listed above are approved to complete the new PBFNA form.

More information from the Ministry of Community & Social Services on "Changes to the Special Diet Allowance: What Health Care Professionals Need to Know" (Feb 2011) is at: www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/programs/social/special_diet_health_care.aspx

Important Information for Your Clients / Patients:

If your client / patient does not agree with any ODSP/OW decision, s/he has **the right to request an Internal Review** of the decision by submitting a request in writing within 30 days of the decision being made. Please refer clients / patients who disagree with a special diet decision to their local legal clinic for free legal advice. Their local legal clinic can be found at: www.legalaid.on.ca/en/contact/contact.asp?type=cl

This information sheet from the Income Security Advocacy Centre may also be helpful: "The Special Diet Allowance: What You Should Know"
www.incomesecurity.org/documents/SpecialDiet-February2011-final.doc

NEW LIST OF CONDITIONS AND AMOUNTS OF ALLOWANCE

Medical Condition	Amount	Medical Condition	Amount
Unintended weight loss / body wasting due to one of more of these medical conditions: Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) Crohn's Disease HIV / AIDS Lupus Malignancy Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Ostomies Pancreatic Insufficiency Short Bowel Syndrome Congestive Heart Failure Cirrhosis (stage 3 and 4) Anorexia Nervosa Cystic Fibrosis Ulcerative Colitis		Food Allergy – Milk / Dairy	
		1-8 years of age	\$32
		9-18 years of age	\$63
		19-50 years of age	\$32
		Over 50 years of age	\$47
		Lactose Intolerance	
		1-8 years of age	\$30
		9-18 years of age	\$59
		19-50 years of age	\$30
		Over 50 years of age	\$45
		Note: If a person has both of these conditions, they will get the amount for Food Allergy – Milk / Dairy	
		Dysphagia requiring thickening fluids	\$125
Lost between 5% and 10% of usual body weight	\$191	Osteoporosis	\$38
Lost more than 10% of usual body weight	\$242		
Chronic Wounds and Burns		Renal Failure	
Stage 1 & 2	\$88	Pre-dialysis	\$52
Stage 3 & 4	\$191	Peritoneal / Hemodialysis	\$88
Diabetes	\$81	Food Allergy – Wheat	\$97
Gestational Diabetes	\$102	Celiac Disease	\$97
Extreme Obesity	\$51	Note: If a person has both of these conditions, they will get one allowance of \$97	
Hypertension	\$86		
Hyperlipidemia	\$51		
Hypercholesterolemia	\$51		
Note: If a person has 2 or more of these conditions, they will get one allowance – whichever amount is the highest for the conditions they have		Insufficient lactation to sustain breast-feeding or breast-feeding contraindicated	
		If infant is lactose tolerant	\$145
		If infant is lactose intolerant	\$162
		(provided until infant reaches 1 year)	

Note: The total amount that anyone can receive under this new list is still \$250.

RESOURCES ON THE SPECIAL DIET ALLOWANCE PROGRAM

Association of Ontario Health Centres:

Special Diet Allowance Fact Sheet / Postcard Campaign
www.aohc.org

Health Providers Against Poverty:

Correspondence on Special Diet Allowance (2010):
www.healthprovidersagainstpoverity.ca/current_campaigns/specialdiet

Income Security Advocacy Centre:

Why the Special Diet Program is Changing (Feb 2011):

- www.incomesecurity.org/documents/SpecialDiet-update-February2011.doc

What Clients Need to Know About the Special Diet (Feb 2011):

- www.incomesecurity.org/documents/SpecialDiet-February2011-final.doc

Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services:

Special Diet Allowance changes
http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/social/special_diet_change.aspx

Ontario Public Health Association:

Letter to Premier McGuinty on the Special Diet Allowance (Aug 2010)
http://www.opha.on.ca/our_voice/letters_e-j.shtml#foodsecurity

Recommendations on the Creation of an Ontario Nutritional Supplement (Nov 2010):

www.rnao.org/Storage/74/6876_ODSP_AC_25_in_5_RNAO_and_SSO_Submission_on_NSP_Nov_2010.pdf

Special Diets Expert Review Committee report (2008):

www.accesson.ca/documents/en/mcsc/social/publications/special_diet_en.pdf

Toronto Public Health:

Update on Proposed Changes to the Special Diet Program (June 2010)
www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2010/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-31677.pdf

The Cost of the Nutritious Food Basket in Your Community

Each public health unit in Ontario is responsible for reporting on the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket in their area. For example, the 2010 Toronto report can be found at www.toronto.ca/health/food_basket.htm.

To find information about the Nutritious Food Basket in your community, contact your local public health unit. A complete listing of all public health units in Ontario may be found at: www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/contact/phu/phuloc_mn.html.

Organizations, Campaigns, and Advocacy to Address Food Insecurity

25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction

25in5.ca

Association of Local Public Health Agencies

Resolution #A05-18, Adequate nutrition for OW and ODSP participants and low wage earners (Mar 2009)

<http://www.alphaweb.org/sdoh.asp>

Association of Ontario Health Centres

www.aohc.org

Dietitians of Canada

www.dietitians.ca

Food Security Resources <http://www.dietitians.ca/Dietitians-View/Food-Security.aspx>

Health Providers Against Poverty

www.healthprovidersagainstopoverty.ca

Income Security Advocacy Centre

www.incomesecurity.org

ODSP Action Coalition

www.odspaction.ca

Ontario Coalition Against Poverty Raise the Rates campaign

update.ocap.ca/rtr

Ontario Public Health Association Food Security Network

http://www.opha.on.ca/our_voice/workgroups/food_security.shtml

Poverty Watch Ontario

www.povertywatchontario.ca

Put Food in the Budget campaign

putfoodinthebudget.ca

Recession Relief Coalition

Hunger Crisis: Report of the Hunger Inquiry report

recessionreliefcoalition.yolasite.com/hunger-inquiry.php

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario

- Social Determinants of Health www.rnao.org/sdh
- Creating Vibrant Communities: RNAO's Challenge to Ontario's Political Parties 2011 Provincial Election.
http://www.rnao.org/Storage/65/5964_Backgrounder.pdf

Endorsed By:

Association of Local Public Health Agencies / Association des agences locales de santé publique
Association of Ontario Health Centres / Association des centres de santé de l'Ontario
Association of Ontario Midwives/ Association des sages-femmes de l'Ontario
Dietitians of Canada/Les diététistes du Canada
Health Providers Against Poverty/ Fournisseurs de soins de santé contre la pauvreté
Income Security Advocacy Centre /Centre d'action pour la sécurité du revenu
ODSP Action Coalition
Ontario College of Family Physicians / Le College des Médecins de famille de l'Ontario
Ontario Public Health Association/l'Association pour la santé publique de l'Ontario
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario / L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers autorisés de l'Ontario



ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO MIDWIVES
Represents Registered Midwives and Promotes the Profession of Midwifery in Ontario

