**Eagle Lake First Nation**

**Ontario Works Program**

**EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION SESSION**

**January 2017**

**Financial & Employment Assistance Programs**

**Financial Assistance**

The focus of the Ontario Works program is to provide both financial and employment assistance to people who are in need. Eligibility for assistance is dependent on the number of people in your household, your actual shelter costs, any other income you may be receiving, any assets you have, and your willingness to participate in your chosen employment assistance activity. You will continue to receive assistance as long as you are eligible.

The Financial Assistance you receive includes an amount for basic needs and shelter. In addition to your monthly income assistance and drug card, you may be eligible to receive other assistance or benefits.

**Basic Prescription Drug Coverage**

You will receive an Ontario Drug Benefits Card each month with your Ontario Works statement of benefits. However, **this card does not cover all prescribed drugs**. When your doctor is giving you a prescription, advise the doctor that you are receiving Ontario Works assistance and ask him/her to make sure the prescribed drug is covered under the drug card. If it is not, ask if they can prescribe a drug that is covered.

If the doctor is unable to prescribe another drug, ask him/her to complete the “Request for an Unlisted Drug Product” form that can be found on-line or from your caseworker. Either you or your doctor must send the completed form to the Ministry of Health to request that the drug be added to your drug card. Ontario Works does not pay for any prescription medications that are not covered by the Drug Card.

**Dental Coverage**

For Children

Basic dental treatment for eligible children who are under 18 years if age and in receipt of Ontario Works participants will be limited to the services covered by the Ministry of Community and Social Services Schedule of Dental Services and Fees (2009) and Ministry of Community and Social Services Schedule of Dental Hygienist Services and Fees (2009).

When a dentist is willing to accept an Ontario Works dependent child as a patient, the dentist is not permitted to bill extra for covered services. If you choose to pay for any additional services that are not covered by the Ontario Works Program, your dentist will bill you directly. **Please note**: If you have a child or children in receipt of ACSD funding, please use the dental card through ODSP.

For Adults

Emergency dental coverage for eligible Ontario Works participants including dependant adults (18 years of age and older) will be limited to the services defined by our local Ontario Works policy. Services are provided for RELIEF OF PAIN only, and may be capped to a specific amount per calendar year.

**Vision Coverage**

You may be eligible to receive financial assistance to purchase eyeglasses. Please tell your optometrist that you are receiving Ontario Works benefits so that the optometrist can fax an estimate to the Ontario Works office for review and approval. The cost of your eye exam is covered under your Ontario Health Card.

**Transition Child Benefit**

The Transition Child Benefit may be available for families in receipt of social assistance who have children under age 18 who may not be receiving the Ontario Child Benefit or may be receiving less than their maximum Ontario Child Benefit (portion that’s included in your Child Tax Benefit).

Your caseworker will be able to check to see if you qualify for this benefit and then add it to your assistance if you are.

**Other Ontario Works Benefits -** recipients may be entitled to other mandatory / discretionary benefits

**All requests for benefits must be pre-approved by the OW Administrator**

**Client must submit a letter of request with supporting documentation**

**Please contact your caseworker for further information**

**Complaints or Concerns**

If you feel that you have not been treated with courtesy and respect, or you are unhappy with the service you have received, or if you have concerns about your participation agreement and your employment plan, you may contact your caseworker’s manager by phone, in person, or in writing to relay your complaint or concern.

**Appeals**

If you disagree with any decision we make regarding your assistance, you have the right to appeal. You may disagree with a decision affecting your eligibility for either basic financial assistance or an additional benefit you requested assistance with. You must file a written appeal within 30 days of receiving the letter denying your request.

It is best to discuss your concerns with your caseworker (or the person who made the decision) first to see if he or she may be able to satisfactorily explain the decision to deny your request. You may have additional information to provide which could which could be helpful in addressing your concerns.

However, if after speaking with your caseworker you still disagree with their decision you can obtain a “Request for Internal Review” form from our office, or you can simply write a letter clearly stating “I am requesting an internal review”. You need to clearly explain why you disagree with the decision.

The decision will be reviewed by an independent party to determine if the decision to deny your request for additional assistance or a benefit, was made in accordance with the Ontario Works legislation.

You will receive the decision of the internal review in writing.

If you still disagree, you may be able to request that the Social Benefits Tribunal (SBT) review our decision. Information to appeal a decision to the SBT will be provided in the internal review decision letter.

**See attached Rights & Responsibilities Form**

**Transitional Supports Fund**

The purpose of the Transitional Support Fund (TSF) is to provide housing and homelessness-related supports to social assistance recipients who reside on a First Nation Community to secure, retain and/or maintain current accommodation.

TSF Rates – Maximum Amounts

The amount payable in a twelve (12) month period, as determined by the Administrator, is based on actual need for recipients with one or more dependent children, or for singles or couples where there are no dependent children.

TSF requests are reviewed individually and assistance can only be provided where the need has clearly been identified. **There must also be no other source of funding available to the recipient or benefit unit.**

The Transitional Supports Fund (TSF) is **NOT** a mandatory benefit within the Ontario Works program therefore the decision to deny this benefit is not appealable.

It is a separate program from OW and is based on a limited annual budget.

**See attached Poster for application process**

**Employment Assistance**

You and your Caseworker will develop an action plan that will assist you on your journey to secure and maintain employment. This plan will become your **Participation Agreement** and is to be completed by all applicants, spouses and dependent adults who are over the age of 18.

Your caseworker will assist by referring you to the necessary resources you need to make your plan successful; such as:

* Skills and education upgrading – working towards your grade 12 diploma, obtaining your GED, or attending job-related courses
* Community Resource Centres, which will have fax machines, phones, computers, photocopiers and other employment resource
* Job search Agencies to assist with your Job Searching either independently or with their assistance

**Community and Employment Placements**

**Community** placements are unpaid positions that will help you gain essential job skills and experience by volunteering your time. An employment worker will assist you to find a placement that best matches your interest and development needs.

**Employment** placements provide you with an opportunity to secure paid employment that may be available in the community. Financial incentives are available to the employer in exchange for their willingness to hire you.

The above placements are available for:

* Job ready clients who need help finding employment
* Clients who require assistance entering or re-entering the work force

**Workshops -** personal-development workshops are provided throughout various communities. Other community agencies are invited to provide information about what types of services they offer and how their programs can assist you.

**Employment Benefits -** there are several funding sources available to assist you with your start up costs when you find employment or are attending your participation activities.

The full-time Employment Benefit, Other Employment & Employment Assistance Activities Benefit for part time employment, Community Placement benefits, Employment Related Expenses and Child Care may be available to assist you.

Assistance may be provided for childcare expenses, transportation costs, clothing, uniforms, tools, work boots, and any other expenses that you may need to achieve your financial independence.

If you are starting school, a training program or taking any other courses, there may be money available for school supplies, textbooks, course fees, childcare expenses, and transportation.

**Monthly Activity Report**

* To be completed by all applicants, spouses and dependent adults 18+ who have a Participation Agreement and chosen an employment assistance activity
* The activity reported on the form must coincide with your chosen activity in your Participation Agreement.
  + I.e. client agreed to job search for 3 months. Client must complete the job search section of the form in full, and sign the 2nd page.
* The monthly activity report must be completed by each participant and **due by the end of the Month** (i.e. January 31, 2017 and every month thereafter)
* The Participation Agreement activities and Monthly Activity Report are monitored on a monthly basis
* See attached Monthly Activity Report

**Receiving Ontario Works while Employed**

While you’re receiving Ontario Works assistance, it is possible to be employed part-time or full-time.

When you find a job, it is VERY IMPORTANT that you notify your caseworker because there may be financial assistance available to purchase the items you require to begin and maintain your employment. Some of the available benefits are listed in this booklet. Even if your earnings are more than your Ontario Works eligibility, you may still qualify for extended health benefits for you and your family.

**During the first three months that you receive Ontario Works, all of your net (take home) earnings will be deducted from your assistance in full.**

After you have collected financial assistance for three consecutive months, the first $200.00 you earn from employment will not affect your Ontario Work’s assistance. Once the first $200.00 has been deducted from your net earnings, the remaining net earnings will only be deducted at 50%. The remaining 50% of your net earnings belong to you.

**How do Earnings Exemptions Work?**

When you receive earnings from employment, you declare all the earnings you received. You write the total gross (before deductions) and net (after deductions) pay on your Income Reporting Statement.

For example:

Gross Earnings $1,300.00 (the amount before deductions)

Net Earnings $1,000.00 (what your actual paycheque was)

Less $200.00 $800.00

Less 50% 400.00 (the amount that is exempt)

**Chargeable $400.00 (what will be deducted from your next assistance payment)**

**$1,000.00 is earned, but only $400.00 is deducted from your Ontario Works payment.**

**Child Care Exemption / Deduction**

If you need to pay for day care in order to be able to go to work, you would be responsible to pay your babysitter and then submit verification (a written receipt) that you have paid a babysitter to watch your children. These costs can be considered as a deduction for any of your children who are under 12 years of age. The person providing the child care must not have an obligation to support the child (absent father or mother).

For private unlicensed child care, the maximum allowable cost is $600.00 per month per child. For licensed child care centres, the full cost may be reimbursed.

The written receipt must be submitted with your corresponding pay stubs and your Income Reporting Statement.

**Completing the Income Reporting Statement (IRS)**

You (and your spouse and/or dependant adult if applicable) are required to sign, date and return the Income Reporting Statement on the 16th of each month in order to continue receiving financial assistance from Ontario Works.

You must declare any other money or income you or anyone in your family unit have received for the period of time which is asked for on the front of the card. The period is from the 16th of the previous month to the 15th of the current month.

The IRS is completed as follows:

1. Fill in every box on the back of the card. If you have no income to declare, you must write NIL in the box.
2. If you have income or money to declare, write the amount you or anyone in your family unit received in the appropriate box.
3. Attach proof for the income you have declared. For example, pay stubs
4. Date and sign the front of the card. Please make sure you do not date it before the 16th of the month or it will be returned to you.
5. Return the card to this office on or shortly after the 16th of the month. If it is not returned in time, your payment could be late, or cancelled.

**Please note that the income you received and declared will be deducted from your cheque. Please make sure you budget accordingly for this.**