

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ELIGIBILITY... AND MCSS-FUNDED ADULT DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

Developmental Services Ontario organizations are the single points of access to adult developmental services across the province. Developmental Services Ontario Central West Region serves Dufferin, Halton, Peel, Waterloo, and Wellington. DSO functions include:

- Provision of information on services and supports, both in developmental services and the broader community;
- Confirmation of eligibility for services and supports;
- Completion of the application and needs assessment;
- Service navigation;
- And referral to services and supports.

The DSOs apply a common provincial eligibility definition and confirmation process. This includes documentation of age, residency, citizenship status, and developmental disability. DSOs confirm eligibility for all adult developmental services and supports; individuals are not asked to confirm their eligibility after their initial contact with the DSO.

This guide is intended for psychologists, psychological associates, or people who would like a more detailed understanding of the eligibility confirmation process. This guide is based, in part, on resource materials developed by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health for the Government of Ontario.

### **DOCUMENTATION REVIEW**

Documentation from a psychologist or psychological associate – typically, a psychological assessment - is reviewed to ensure that the individual meets three criteria: cognitive, adaptive, and age of onset. The requirements for each criterion are outlined below.

#### *Cognitive Functioning*

A person's psychological assessment must indicate an overall (full-scale IQ) score of two standard deviations below the mean, plus or minus standard error of measurement, on a standardized intelligence test, such as the WAIS-R. This equates to a standard score of 75 or lower (due to standard error of measurement); at or below the 5<sup>th</sup> percentile (due to standard error of measurement); or clinically significant descriptions, such as "mildly delayed range" (or more severe.)

When someone's overall IQ does not meet the cognitive criterion, we can look at the results from specific indices. Here, a person's full-scale IQ may not meet the cognitive criterion – but there is a scatter among the different

abilities and specific factors or indices of cognitive functioning (such as verbal reasoning, working memory, etc.) When a psychological assessment report confirms that a person's cognitive functioning falls two standard deviations below the mean in two or more indices on a standardized intelligence test AND they have a history of requiring habilitative support, then they may also meet the cognitive criterion. In reviewing indices' results, scores must be 70 or below, and not 71 to 75.

Finally, DSO Central West Region may apply a third option. When a psychologist or psychological associate has made a clinical determination that the person demonstrates significant limitations in cognitive functioning and has a history of requiring habilitative supports, DSO Central West Region may confirm that the person meets the cognitive criterion. This may include situations where someone is unable to participate or complete testing. This can only be confirmed by a psychologist or psychological associate.

### *Adaptive Functioning*

Once someone has met the cognitive criterion, we look at adaptive functioning. This includes practical, conceptual, and social skills. Practical skills include activities of daily living, work-related skills, and ability to participate in the community. Conceptual skills include language, reading and writing, use of money, time, and number concepts. Social skills include interpersonal skills, self-esteem, social responsibility, and social problem-solving.

When evaluating documentation for adaptive functioning, a psychological assessment will often include use of a test like the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales or the Scales of Independent Behavior. In the results of these tests, we look for a score of at least two standard deviations below the mean, plus or minus standard error measurement in conceptual, social, or practical skills (or equivalent.) This equates to a standard score of 75 or below, below the 5<sup>th</sup> percentile, or equivalent clinical descriptors of severity or age-equivalents.

In some situations, we may also be able to use other assessment information or documentation to confirm that a person meets the adaptive criterion for eligibility. We would be confirming that these limitations were reported consistently, or in more than one setting.

### *Age of Onset*

Finally, DSOs need to confirm that limitations in cognitive and adaptive functioning were present before age 18. There are many reasons why a person may have severely limited adaptive skills. Severe mental health issues, learning disabilities, acquired brain injury, or certain other medical conditions can result in severe adaptive impairments. However, a person must have both significant cognitive and adaptive impairments, noted prior to age 18, to qualify for adult developmental services and supports.

Age of onset may be confirmed simply by having a psychological assessment that was completed prior to that age. A psychologist may also make reference to the person's history in their report. If this is not provided or is unclear, the DSO will need to contact the psychologist to confirm that this criterion has been met.

### **WHAT IF A PERSON DOES NOT HAVE THE REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION?**

The *Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act* and its corollary regulations provide a definition of eligibility that can only be confirmed by a psychologist or psychological associate. For people who do not have an assessment, there may be limited, publicly-funded assessment resources available in their community. Alternatively, people may choose to purchase an assessment. A registry of psychologists can be accessed via the website of the Ontario College of Psychologists. For more information, please contact your DSO community office.