

## Direct Family Support Program

### **What is the Direct Family Support Program?**

The Direct Family Support Program (formerly the In-Home Support Program) is a funding program provided through the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services. The Direct Family Support Program provides funding to **eligible** families to help them support their family member (both children and adults) with a disability at home.

### **How do you qualify?**

Your family may qualify for this program, if you and your family member with disabilities meet specific criteria. For instance, the program is income tested, so the family income cannot exceed a certain dollar amount. Eligibility criteria are different for children and adults. The Department of Community Services list full eligibility criteria as follows:

#### Eligibility for Children

The following criteria must be met to qualify for funding:

- The family and child are permanent residents of Nova Scotia.
- The child is under 19 years of age.
- The child is living in the home of a family member/guardian of the child.
- The child has been diagnosed by an approved clinician as having a mild or moderate intellectual disability with a significant behavioural challenge that has been documented within the last two years.
- The child has been diagnosed by an approved clinician as having a severe intellectual disability that has been documented within the last two years.
- The child has a significant physical disability with ongoing functional limitations that are a result of the disability and which seriously limits their capacity to perform age appropriate activities of daily living as determined by an approved clinician.
- The family meets the DFSC (Direct Family Support for Children) Program income guidelines.
- The family agrees to participate in the assessment process.

#### Eligibility for Adults

The following criteria must be met to qualify for funding:

- The applicant and their family are permanent residents of Nova Scotia.
- The applicant is 19 years or over.
- The applicant is residing in the home of a family member or guardian.
- The applicant has a medical diagnosis of one or more of the following: intellectual disability, long term mental illness, or physical disability.
- The applicant and family have unmet needs as identified through the assessment process.

- The applicant meets the financial eligibility criteria as outlined in SPD (Services for Persons with Disabilities) policy and procedures.
- The applicant and their family agree to participate in the assessment process as outlined in SPD policy and procedures

### **How do you apply?**

The first step is a telephone call to your local Community Services office (<http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/department/contact/FindLocalOffices.html> or call toll free at 1-877-424-1177). When you explain you are interested in the Direct Family Support program, they will set up an appointment for an assessment.

The assessment takes place in your home. The caseworker will come to visit you and your family member with high needs. The following things will be discussed with you:

- your family life and how you are managing
- your family income. You will be asked to provide documentation of your family's yearly income
- details on your family member's diagnosis, their functioning ability and their needs.

The caseworker may also ask about any unmet needs your family has. These are extra costs which you family experiences because of your family member's disability. These needs can be different depending on whether your family member is a child or an adult. For children, funding may be available for medications, transportation to medical related appointments, and equipment such as diapers. For adults, funding for unmet needs may include shelter, food, clothing, prescriptions, transportation and a comforts (personal use) allowance.

Following the assessment, you will be notified if you qualify for the program or not.

### **Once you Qualify:**

Once you qualify, you will begin to receive a monthly cheque. Some of the money will be designated as respite dollars, and some may be for identified unmet needs. You must use the funds as they are designated, and you must account for how you use the funds, so save your receipts!! You are required to submit receipts to your DCS caseworker 4 times a year.

### **Remember:**

The Direct Family Support Program provides families with the funds to hire respite workers or fund respite opportunities for the family member. Direct Family Support does not have respite workers to offer to families. It is the responsibility of the parents themselves to find appropriate respite workers or programs.

Respite workers can be neighbours, students, community workers – anyone able to manage the needs of your family member with a disability. Respite workers being paid with funds from the Direct Family Support Program **cannot** be family members.

The Direct Family Support Program exists to offer families regular breaks from their caregiving responsibilities. This program does not provide funding for full time in-home support. More details may be found at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/disabilities/DirectFamilySupport.html>

To contact your local Community Services office: on the web <http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/departement/contact/FindLocalOffices.html> or call toll free at 1-877-424-1177