



Committee Report

To: Councillor Mark Goetz, Chair and
Members of the Human Services Committee

From: Tina Metcalfe
Director of Human Services

Date: August 3, 2023

Re: Q2 - 2023 Income and Support Services Update

Staff Recommendation:

The Q2-2023 Income and Support Services update is for information.

Background:

Employment Services Transformation and Integrated Case Management

The beginning of Q2 was marked by the official “go-live” on April 1, 2023, for Employment Services Transformation (EST) within the Phase 1 catchment area of Stratford-Bruce Peninsula, which encompasses Bruce County.

The EST initiative involves the integration of employment services from Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) into the Employment Ontario system, with a dedicated Service System Manager (SSM) now overseeing employment services for the entire catchment area.

The Integrated Case Management (ICM) Protocol, co-designed with the SSM, was also implemented at the beginning of Q2. ICM protocol provides the framework for how Employment Ontario and Social Assistance service providers will collaborate and support client needs in an effort to improve employment outcomes for social assistance recipients.

In support of ICM, key divisional staff have been actively participating in the monthly Social Assistance Integration Committee Meetings with our SSM and EO Service Providers to share information, evaluate processes and troubleshoot issues pertaining to client referral pathways, readiness, returned referrals, case conferencing standards and benefit coordination.

To establish more culturally diverse service options for clients, outreach occurred in Q2 with two new Employment Ontario service providers in Bruce County: Huronia Aboriginal Management Board and College Boreal. Further engagement will take place in Q3 when both organizations have finalized their staffing and will attend an Income & Support Services Team meeting to talk about their unique services and supports.

A full staff engagement session was also held with the largest EO Service Provider in Bruce County, VPI, to introduce new staff, foster relationship building, and create a better understanding of each other’s roles and responsibilities under the new ICM protocol.

Consistent with our MCCSS approved Client Transition Plan, Income and Support Services staff continued work throughout Q2 to prioritize new and existing clients for the transition to the new service delivery model through the completion of a Common Assessment Module 1 (which includes a Mental Health and Addictions Screening Tool) and an Action Plan. These assessment tools are used to determine and document individual stability support needs and determine readiness for transitioning clients to employment services. Based on results, staff are working with clients to connect them with services and supports to address their identified stability needs, which are often complex.

Data from Action Plan referrals in Q2 show that the top three identified needs and referrals are for supports needed to address precarious housing and homelessness, food insecurity and mental health conditions. As of the end of Q2, 42% of Ontario Works clients in Bruce County have been supported with completing a Common Assessment Module 1 and 75% of clients have a completed Action Plan.

Social Assistance Renewal

Income and Support Services staff continued to work on various initiatives in Q2 in support of the vision for Social Assistance Renewal announced by the province in February 2021.

Pilot projects that Bruce County had been participating in with the Intake Benefit Administration Unit to inform future iterations of the Centralized Intake model ended at the beginning of Q2 due to insufficient data being captured. Instead, key divisional staff have been participating at the Centralized Intake Collaborative & Strategic Tables which were established in Q2 to promote collaboration between municipal delivery partners, the Intake and Benefits Administration Unit and MCCSS aimed at identifying the priorities to improve the current state of Centralized Intake.

As at the end of Q2, approximately 40% of applications processed through IBAU continue to require intervention by the local office and are sent to our staff for processing. As such, the promise of administrative time savings to caseworkers has not been fully realized which hinders their ability to effectively connect clients with needed services and supports and participate in meaningful Integrated case management activities with other service providers.

Additionally in Q2, the “Make Your Way” Program was delivered to the first cohort of social assistance recipients from Bruce and Grey Counties. Eight participants were successful in completing the virtual four-week comprehensive life skills program that was co-facilitated by staff from the Adult Learning Centre and caseworkers from Bruce County Human Services and Grey County Social Services. This program was developed to support clients with complex needs who are not yet ready for employment services. It helps clients to identify their strengths and establish meaningful goals to move forward in their lives. The “Make Your Way” program will be delivered to two more cohorts in the fall of 2023.

The collaborative work with our ODSP partner continued in Q2 as well. Staff participated in developing a new file transfer protocol between Ontario Works and ODSP that streamlines the process and better aligns with modernized business practices such as Electronic Data Management and E-Signature. Our staff also engaged with ODSP about the coordination of issuing stability support benefits for non-Disabled adults and provided a detailed

presentation to ODSP staff on discretionary benefits that can be accessed by ODSP recipients through the Ontario Works discretionary benefits program.

To support business changes and the achievement of the nine new outcome measures for Phase 1 EST sites, a comprehensive review and reorganization of the Income and Supports Division was completed in Q2.

Effective June 1, front line staff are now divided into two primary roles: Program Eligibility Workers and Caseworkers. The new structure is designed to balance workload and better support an integrated case management model of service delivery that allows caseworkers to focus more time on connecting clients to stability supports and services, while continuing to ensure that the financial and regulatory components of the Ontario Works program are being delivered in an accountable and efficient manner.

Training was provided to support the transition of staff into their newly defined roles and weekly checkpoints were established to monitor progress and identify further training needs. These will continue throughout 2023. Communication also took place with key internal and external partners regarding the new divisional structure.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

There are no financial, staffing, legal or IT considerations associated with this report.

Interdepartmental Consultation:

There were no interdepartmental consultations for this report.

Link to Strategic Goals and Elements:

Goal #1 Build a strong and inclusive community.

Goal #2 Enhance and grow partnerships.

Goal #5 Ensure a positive, inclusive, and accountable work culture.

Report Author:

Aryn Becker, Income and Support Services Manager

Departmental Approval:

Tina Metcalfe

Director, Human Services

Approved for Submission:

Christine MacDonald

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer