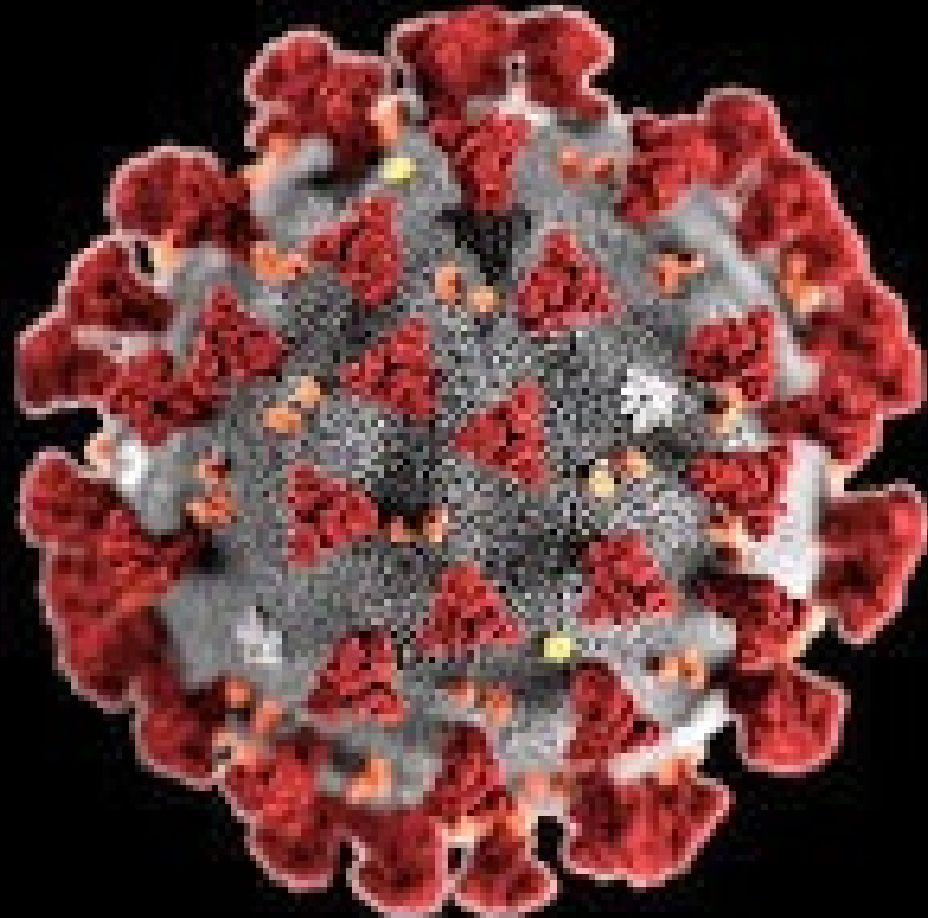


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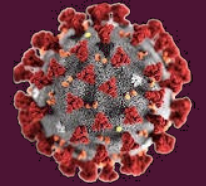
# SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND COVID-19

ACLCO WEBINAR

9 APRIL 2020

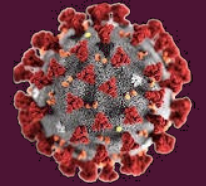


# FEDERAL RELIEF MEASURES – CERB



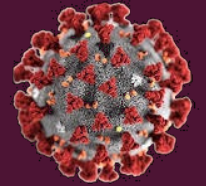
- Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)
  - Taxable benefit of \$2,000/month (\$500/week) for up to 16 weeks for workers who have **stopped working due to COVID-19** – 15 March to 3 October 2020
    - Must be “residing in Canada” but not necessary to be citizen or permanent resident
    - Must have a valid SIN, and be at least 15 years old
    - Must have had income of at least \$5000 in 2019 or past 12 months (employment / self-employment / EI maternity or parental benefits or combination thereof)
    - Must expect to have no employment / self-employment income for at least 14 days in initial four-week period and no employment income at all in subsequent benefit periods

# FEDERAL RELIEF MEASURES – CERB



- What does “stopped working due to COVID-19” mean?
  - You have been let go from your job or your hours have been reduced to zero – layoff not required
  - You are in quarantine or sick due to COVID-19
  - You are away from work to take care of others because they are in quarantine or sick due to COVID-19
  - You are away from work to take care of children or other dependants whose care facility is closed due to COVID-19
  - You cannot quit your job voluntarily
  - Not currently available to people with minimal income or students unable to get work
- No medical certificate required for CERB – personal contact information and SIN only – but additional documentation to verify eligibility may be required later

# FEDERAL RELIEF MEASURES – CERB



- CERB and EI:
  - Cannot receive both EI and CERB for the same period
  - EI regular or sickness claims made on or after 15 March are being automatically processed as CERB at \$500/week – maternity/parental/caregiving EI claims proceed as usual
  - EI claims based on work stoppage prior to 15 March processed under usual EI rules
  - May qualify for EI after CERB ends – CERB period should not affect EI entitlement
- Apply for CERB through online portal:
  - payments faster through direct deposit – set up **My Account** – see [Q and As](#)

# CANADA EMERGENCY RESPONSE BENEFIT

If you were born in **January, February, or March**, apply on **Mondays**.

If you were born in **April, May, or June**, apply on **Tuesdays**.

If you were born in **July, August, or September**, apply on **Wednesdays**.

If you were born in **October, November, or December**, apply on **Thursdays**.

**Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays** are for **everyone** 😊



Canada Revenue  
Agency

Agence du revenu  
du Canada

Canada

# FEDERAL RELIEF MEASURES – OTHER

- **EI**: waiting period waived for people claiming sickness benefits due to quarantine – no need to provide medical certificate –toll-free number at **1-833-381-2725**
- **CCB**: May payment will be automatically increased by up to \$300/child
- **GST credit**: One-time enhancement of \$400-\$600 on April payment
  - Impact on clients with CRA refund setoffs? Speak to CRA collection officer at **1-800-675-6184** (8am-4pm)
- **Taxes**: Filing due date for 2019 tax returns deferred to 1 June 2020

# FEDERAL RELIEF MEASURES – OTHER

- **CPP/OAS:** apply online without supporting documentation for now
- **CPP Disabled Contributor's Child Benefit:** signature of institution not needed on Declaration of Attendance – existing benefits to be continued
- **Canada Student Loans:** Interest-free moratorium on repayment for 6 months
- **Immigration loans:** Collection suspended until September 2020
- **Indigenous Support Fund**
- See [Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan](#)

# ONTARIO RELIEF MEASURES - OVERVIEW

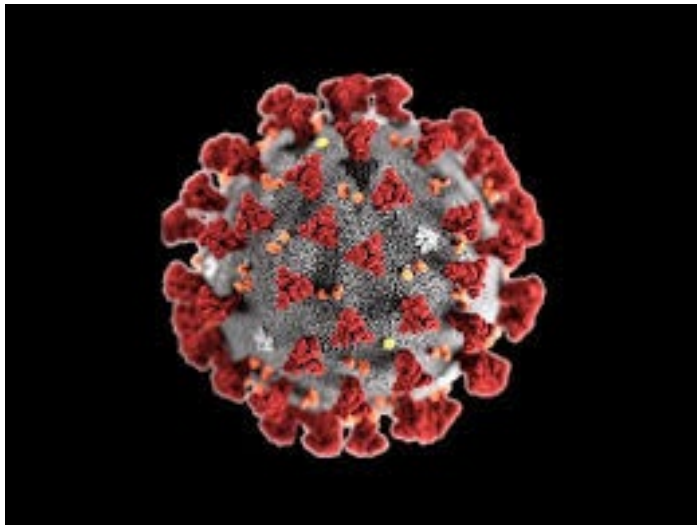
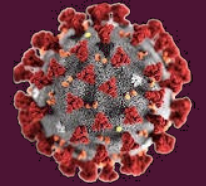
- See Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19 (25 March) and announcements through portal at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/>
- **Seniors:** GAINS payments for low-income seniors doubled to \$166/month for singles and \$332/month for couples for 6 months
- **Children:** One-time payments to families with children affected by school and daycare closures (\$200/child up to 12, \$250/child with special needs) – application portal now open
  - Clients who received Support for Parents during school strikes do not need to re-apply
  - *Should* be exempt from income/assets for purposes of OW/ODSP eligibility – no confirmation yet



# ONTARIO RELIEF MEASURES - OVERVIEW

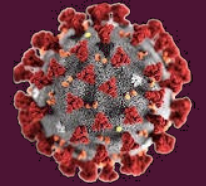
- **Energy relief:** off-peak price 24 hours a day for 45 days – expanded eligibility for LEAP – winter ban on disconnections for non-payment extended to July 31
- **Students:** OSAP loan and interest accrual relief for 6 months
- **\$200 million in new Social Services funding...**

# SOCIAL SERVICES RELIEF – NEW FUNDING



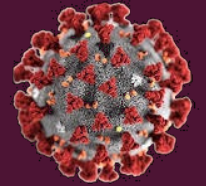
- \$200 million total in two streams:
  - \$148 million new funding to Service Managers for frontline critical social services
  - \$52 million new funding to individuals (current recipients and not on assistance)
- Funding also to be made available to organizations delivering services to First Nations individuals and families – details to come from MCCSS

# SOCIAL SERVICES RELIEF – SERVICE MANAGERS



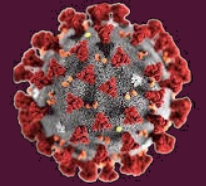
- Funding to Service Managers to be managed by MMAH
- Service Managers and DSSABs to have flexibility to allocate funds based on local priorities and programs
- Relief monies may be used to:
  - Fund service providers (shelters, food banks, charities and non-profits)
  - Fund expansion of existing housing stability programs
  - Purchase goods and services (food, transportation, medical supplies, hotel rooms)

# SOCIAL SERVICES RELIEF - INDIVIDUALS



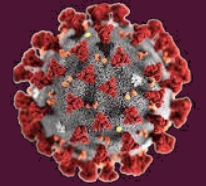
- **For current recipients** – expanded funding for discretionary benefits:
  - Caps removed for March and April 2020 so that frontline staff can provide additional discretionary benefits to meet emergency COVID-19 needs (cleaning supplies, transportation, food, clothing)
  - Available to both OW and ODSP recipients – request must be made through online application portal or caseworker
  - Province has set maximum payment of \$100/singles and \$200/families – not all OW administrators allowing up to provincial maximum so less may be available to OW recipients than to ODSP recipients depending on where they live

# SOCIAL SERVICES RELIEF - INDIVIDUALS



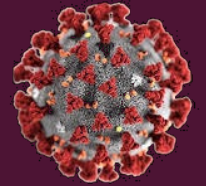
- **For non-recipients** – expanded access to OW Emergency Assistance:
  - Changes to wording of OWR 134 s. 56:
    - Time limit on receipt of EA before full OW application required increased from 16 to **48 days**
    - “...the applicant does not have enough money or assets and is unable to obtain, **or has limited access to**, credit necessary to provide for the basic needs and shelter needs for his or her benefit unit...”
  - Policy limiting Emergency Assistance to once in 6-month period suspended
- MCCSS putting in place centralized team to deal with increased inquiries and support people to complete applications

# SOCIAL SERVICES RELIEF – OPEN LETTER



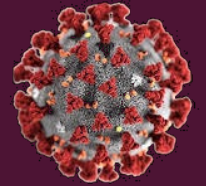
- Coalition involving more than 130 organizations – including ISAC and many other clinics – has issued an open letter urging MCCSS to ensure meaningful support to province’s most vulnerable
- Two key calls:
  - Immediately increase social assistance rates
  - Do not claw back federal benefits from social assistance recipients
- Letter posted on ISAC website in English and French

# SERVICE CHANGES – ACCESS TO STAFF



- Access to OW and ODSP offices and staff
  - Systems vary across province but most OW offices now closed to the public or offering limited access – **check local Social Services websites**
  - Current recipients encouraged to contact OW by e-mail or telephone - new applications being taken online or by telephone
  - MyBenefits available to check payment status, report address changes etc.
  - Payments normally delivered by direct bank deposit, reloadable payment cards or mail should be issued as usual – **arrangements for cheque pickups vary**

# SERVICE CHANGES – ODSP DISABILITY



- MCCSS memo on DAU-clinic communications at **CRO No. SAS-G-01384**:
  - DAU **remains open** and is processing applications and internal reviews
  - Internal review requests and consent forms sent to DAU may be **signed and submitted by clinics** on behalf of clients during the emergency period
  - DAU has set up a **secure portal** for clinics to share private and confidential information with the DAU if fax not available because clinic offices are closed – clinics should contact **Mary Virginillo** ([mary.virginillo@Ontario.ca](mailto:mary.virginillo@Ontario.ca) or **416-212-1541**) for details
- ODSP applicants or recipients facing deadlines to submit DDPs or medical review packages who cannot get appointments to see health-care providers should call the DAU at **1-888-256-6758** to request extensions



# POLICY CHANGES – VERIFICATION

- Verification to be “risk-managed”:
  - Requirements for visual verification and “wet” signatures temporarily deferred
  - Clients not required to submit documentation for the time being **BUT** original documents may still be requested at a later date
- Eligibility Verification Process reviews suspended until May
  - All EVP Case Audits commenced in March to be deleted by “data fix”
  - Staff to continue working through backlog of EVP reviews from previous months

# POLICY CHANGES – SUSPENSIONS

- Clients will not be suspended for failing to report income or provide verification:
  - All automated SAMS suspensions (OW and ODSP) for income reporting and file verifications are being suppressed
  - First Nation Administrators not using SAMS are being instructed not to apply such suspensions

# POLICY CHANGES – PARTICIPATION

- Participation requirements suspended
  - Participation agreement updates suspended
  - Initial participation agreements to be completed without activities with a 60-day review
  - Clients should not be referred from ODSP to either Employment Supports or OW (dependent adults) for participation in employment activities

# POLICY CHANGES – REFUGEE CLAIMANTS

- IRCC has cancelled all refugee claim appointments until April 13 (so far) – no more in-person interviews until further notice
- Clients waiting for appointments with IRCC prior to eligibility interviews with OW should not have their assistance suspended during the period of delay

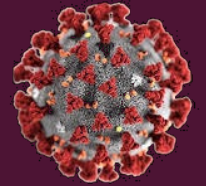
## POLICY CHANGES – TIME-LIMITED BENEFITS

- Expiry dates on special diet allowance, MSN benefits and pay-direct arrangements are to be automatically extended through SAMS (manually by First Nation Administrators)
- New applications for pregnancy-breastfeeding nutritional allowance will be accepted without usual health-care provider verification – clients can self-declare or submit verification by midwife

POLICY  
CHANGES –  
WHAT WE  
DON'T YET  
KNOW

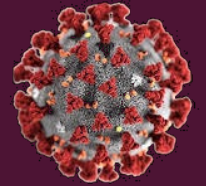
- How OW/ODSP will treat CERB and other special COVID-19 benefits
- Details of new processes in development:
  - simplified applications for emergency assistance
  - applications for ODSP discretionary benefits
  - applications for special diet and MSN

# SOCIAL BENEFITS TRIBUNAL – LEGISLATION



- O. Reg. 73/20: procedural time limits suspended (March 16)
- *Hearings in Tribunal Proceedings (Temporary Measures Act)* (25 March)
  - Applies to tribunal proceedings even if commenced before Act passed
  - Gives tribunals significant discretion to choose form of hearing and make directions as to conduct of hearing – as they consider “appropriate”
  - Prevails over SPPA and tribunal’s own Rules that put checks on discretion
  - Arguably, tribunals must still comply with requirements of procedural fairness

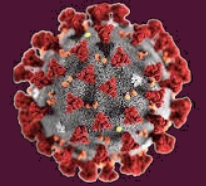
# SOCIAL BENEFITS TRIBUNAL – POLICY



- Tribunals Ontario policy posted on website:
  - All front-line counter services closed until further notice
  - In-person hearings being postponed and either converted to hearings by teleconference or in writing – where feasible – or rescheduled to later date
  - If parties are unable to meet a timeline (e.g. time to submit an application or appeal), they will be allowed to do so at a later date
- SBT notice: appeals, supporting documentation and submissions should be faxed to **416-326-5135** – expect processing delays with mail/courier

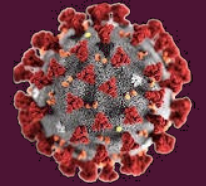


# SOCIAL BENEFITS TRIBUNAL - PRACTICE



- SBT is converting all in-person and video hearings to telephone hearings
- The SCSA wrote to Tribunals Ontario, SBT and MAG on March 20 raising clinic concerns and urging a halt to hearings by telephone during the COVID-19 emergency, and has continued to advocate with the SBT since then for alternative process changes
- See e-mails between the SCSA and (Acting) Associate Chair Pamila Ahlfeld at [CRO No. SAS-O-00335](#)

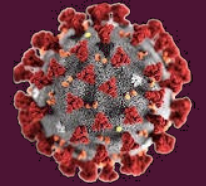
# SOCIAL BENEFITS TRIBUNAL – PRACTICE



- Bottom line: the SBT **will** continue to schedule telephone hearings – staff will not contact parties in advance – objections may be made under the SBT Rules and concerns will be addressed on a case-by-case basis – Members have been directed to treat adjournment requests with flexibility and empathy
- See sample clinic submissions objecting to a teleconference hearing on natural justice grounds at [CRO No. SAS-C-00104](#)

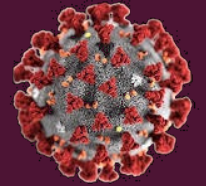
**\* Please share your experiences! \***

# CLINIC RESOURCE OFFICE



- Staff working from home but available by e-mail – main CRO e-mail address ([cro@lao.on.ca](mailto:cro@lao.on.ca)) and telephone numbers being monitored
- Research and litigation support still available
- No website orientations for now but we can help with website searches
- New practice note being updated frequently:
  - **Social Assistance and COVID-19: Facts and Resources** [CRO No. SAS-P-00253]
- This PowerPoint presentation will be posted at **CRO No. SAS-P-00254**

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US! – FROM THE SCSA



**TODAY'S PRESENTERS:**

**Sally Colquhoun** – Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic: [colquhos@lao.on.ca](mailto:colquhos@lao.on.ca)

**Arash Ghiassi** – ISAC: [ghiassia@lao.on.ca](mailto:ghiassia@lao.on.ca)

**Gwyneth Pearce** – CRO: [pearceg@lao.on.ca](mailto:pearceg@lao.on.ca)

See the [Social Assistance page](#) on the CRO website or the [SCSA page](#) on the KnowledgeNOW website to find out what the SCSA is doing and how to reach your regional SCSA representative