

INFORMATION REPORT

TO: Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee	WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE
COMMITTEE DATE: October 19, 2011	
SUBJECT/REPORT NO: Special Diet Allowance Update (CS11084) (City Wide)	
SUBMITTED BY: Joe-Anne Priel General Manager Community Services Department	PREPARED BY: Alfonso Bruno (905)546-2424 Ext. 1543 Kerry Lubrick (905)546-2424 Ext. 4855
SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

Not Applicable

Information:

Effective April 1, 2011, the changes to the Special Diet Allowance (SDA) impacted clients/recipients of Ontario Works (OW) in the following ways:

- Amount of benefits approved for various medical conditions;
- List of medical conditions covered; and,
- Rules regarding the administration.

In order to allow for an effective transition, the Ministry provided one-time funding to municipalities to offset added administration costs. The City of Hamilton received 100% provincial funding in the amount of \$144,500. This funding was allocated to temporary staffing required to administer the program (a dedicated team), and also to cover additional operational cost associated with communications, printing, and mailing.

Correspondence was sent to all SDA recipients explaining the changes to the SDA and the requirement for a new application form. The recipients were requested to have the new application form completed and returned to an OW office on or before July 31, 2011.

As a result of the applications received and processed:

- 896 recipients have an increase in their SDA
- 1084 recipients have a decrease in their SDA
- 70 recipients have no change in their SDA
- Over 1200 recipients did not return a new SDA form and therefore had the SDA removed from their monthly benefits effective July 31, 2011

It is assumed that 35% of the applications were not returned due to any/all of the following reasons:

- Lack of a health practitioner
- Change in health status
- New eligibility criteria
- Health practitioners not having required documentation to support renewing the SDA

As of August 31, 2011, the Special Diet Project Team has been disbanded and the responsibility of monitoring ongoing eligibility for the SDA has been re-assigned to the Case Manager. It is projected that there will be approximately \$2,200,000 (gross) / \$259,600 (net) savings annually based on this new SDA schedule. These savings will be incorporated into the 2012 Operational Budget request.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services has indicated that the SDA will be examined within the context of the broader Social Assistance Review along with other targeted benefits.