

# Summary Status Table in Response to the Report of the Auditor General of Ontario

## Ontario Disability Support Program

Section 3.09, Volume 1 of the 2019 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

| Rec # | OAGO's Recommendation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | MCCSS Completed Undertaking                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | MCCSS Outstanding Undertaking<br>(including timeline)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| 1     | We recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services investigate and identify the extent that either its policies and procedures to administer and deliver the Ontario Disability Support Program and/or its non-compliance with these policies and procedures have contributed to caseload growth, and take corrective action so that only individuals who are eligible for ODSP receive benefits from the program.                                                                                                             | <p>The ministry examined drivers of caseload increases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early February 2020, ministry staff across several branches participated in two meetings to discuss the scope of the caseload review and the factors of caseload growth that should be included in the analysis.</li> <li>• Senior program policy staff reviewed policy changes over the past 10+ years and identified areas that should be included in the analysis.</li> <li>• A research outline has been drafted.</li> </ul> <p>The ministry completed a preliminary / high level decomposition of ODSP caseload growth into components related to population growth; including changes related to population levels (volume), aging and all other factors.</p> <p>The ministry has identified policy and process changes that could help explain caseload growth not related to population changes.</p> | <p>Continued analysis of identified areas and research. Progress has been delayed due to competing priorities arising from COVID-19.</p> <p>Estimated date of completion by June 30, 2021</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 2     | <p>To better identify and prevent applicants who are not financially eligible for the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) from receiving benefits, we recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (Ministry):</p> <p>A. implement a process to monitor and to take corrective action in instances where local ODSP offices and their caseworkers are not complying with the requirement to verify the accuracy and completeness of each applicant's declared income and assets using the third-party information</p> | <p>The ministry has started to improve the use of third-party information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training course on CRA 3rd Party Information is available for staff on LearnON - the Ontario Public Service Online learning platform: SAMS Access to Canada Revenue Agency Information.</li> <li>• A benefit income data exchange report has been designed and tested with Service Canada. The report is planned to be in production by December 2020; delayed from the original March timeline due to Covid as Service Canada was not able to proceed with testing.</li> <li>• Ministry data on cases without SINs is being prepared for further review and follow-up with clients.</li> <li>• Engagement with Service Canada conducted to explore the deployment of SIN clinics, to support clients obtaining a new SIN at local offices.</li> </ul>                                    | <p>Future activities to improve the use of third-party information include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A broad strategy to create a new Social Assistance Digital Application, currently in Phase 1. Some automation with Equifax third party checks have already commenced. Automating 3rd party checks is included in Phase 2 of this work which is anticipated to be completed and in production by March 2022.</li> <li>• Exploring options for providing refresher training on other third parties data sources: Equifax, OSAP, EI, MTO, NCBS on the NET and others by March 2021.</li> <li>• SIN data has and continues to be developed to identify clients without SIN for each local office. The data will be shared with the field to action in November 2020. Clients without a SIN will be sent communications to attend (local office or regionally administered) SIN workshops by March 2021. The ministry continues to explore new approaches to ensure SIN is captured.</li> </ul> |

| Rec # | OAGO's Recommendation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | MCCSS Completed Undertaking | MCCSS Outstanding Undertaking<br>(including timeline)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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|       | <p>sharing agreements the Ministry has in place;</p> <p>B. provide mandatory, relevant and comprehensive training for caseworkers on how to interpret the results of third-party checks, and to identify and investigate discrepancies between the information applicants have declared and the information obtained from third-party checks; and</p> <p>C. review the information held in the Social Assistance Management System to identify and collect all missing information, such as a Social Insurance Number, required to carry out third-party checks.</p> |                             | <p>The Ministry plans to update key performance measurement reports to include indicators related to eligibility verification with the implementation of end of 2021/22 fiscal (March 2022). To support continuous quality improvement and take corrective action where warranted.</p> |

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| 3     | <p>To prevent financially ineligible Ontario Works recipients from transferring to the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and receiving income support that they are not entitled to, we recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. update its directives, policies and business procedures to clearly define and communicate Ontario Works responsibilities for performing third-party checks prior to transferring recipients to ODSP, and ODSP caseworker responsibilities in instances where these checks have not been performed;</li> <li>B. implement a process to monitor compliance with these requirements; and</li> <li>C. put in place mechanisms to hold Ontario Works service managers accountable in instances of non-compliance with ODSP requirements.</li> </ul> | <p>The ministry has established a working group to address the transfer of ineligible Ontario Works recipients to ODSP.</p> <p>The ministry has reinforced the requirement that Ontario Works service delivery partners undertake third party checks on cases transferring to ODSP as part of its 2020/21 service planning priorities.</p> <p>Capturing evidence that third party checks have been completed for the mandatory CRA and Equifax checks have been updated in the OW and ODSP Intake courses.</p>                                                                                                                                                     | <p>By March 2021 the ministry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amend business processes, directives and job aids to show third party checks as mandatory for eligibility and before transfers.</li> <li>• Review learning curriculum to incorporate capturing third party checks and develop curriculum on understanding third party information reports).</li> <li>• Develop a performance monitoring plan and reporting process to track performance against service planning priorities</li> <li>• Implement SAMS enhancements to ensure that mandatory third-party checks are captured in the system.</li> </ul> <p>By January 2022 the ministry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement levers to promote sustained and continuous improvement of program requirements as part of the transformed accountability model for social assistance.</li> </ul> <p>By January 2022 the ministry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor performance against the established expectation as a part of the overall Service Planning priorities monitoring.</li> </ul> |
| 4     | <p>So that all applicants who meet the Ontario Disability Support Program's definition of a disabled individual receive benefits, we recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. review the reasonableness of its targets and expectations for the number of disability applications it expects its triage adjudicators to complete</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>A ministry working group held several meetings between January and February 2020 to brainstorm, plan activities, identify responsibilities and create workplans on the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triage improvements</li> <li>• Quality Assurance Framework</li> <li>• Approval rates</li> </ul> <p>By March and July 2020 the ministry has respectively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developed an adjudication quality assurance framework.</li> <li>• This formal process to regularly review the appropriateness of decisions to approve and reject applicants as disabled was implemented.</li> </ul> | <p>No outstanding ministry undertaking.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

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|       | <p>and to update its targets accordingly;</p> <p>B. implement a formal process to regularly review the appropriateness of decisions to approve and reject applicants as disabled; and</p> <p>C. monitor and investigate significant differences in the rates that adjudicators approve applicants as disabled and take steps to facilitate corrective actions where differences are determined to be unreasonable.</p>                                                    | <p>By June 2020, the ministry has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developed and implemented a process to monitor and investigate significant differences in the rates that adjudicators approve applicants as disabled, and then take corrective action.</li> </ul> <p>By September 2020 the ministry has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reviewed the number of disability applications expected by triage adjudicators to complete (20-25 per day); and</li> <li>updated the target to 13-16 applications at the triage stage per day.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                  |
| 5     | <p>So that only applicants who meet the Ontario Disability Support Program's definition of a disabled individual receive benefits, we recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services update the Adjudication Unit's handbook and triage guidelines to reflect advancements in treatment associated with medical conditions where there have been significant changes that may no longer render individuals disabled, or permanently disabled.</p> | <p>A ministry working group held several meetings between January and February 2020 to review the Adjudication Handbook and identify the content to be updated or researched further.</p> <p>By September 2020 the ministry has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>conducted research and reviewed the current ODSP Adjudication Handbook and Triage Guidelines to identify the content to be updated.</li> <li>Developed the 2020 edition of the Adjudication Handbook (3rd edition) was to replace both the currently used second edition and Triage Guidelines.</li> <li>This digital document can be used across all adjudication stages and reflects advancements in treatment and science associated with medical conditions.</li> </ul> | <p>By October 2020, the ministry will launch the approved updated 2020 edition of the Adjudication Handbook.</p> |
| 6     | <p>So that only applicants who meet the Ontario Disability Support Program's (ODSP) definition of a disabled individual receive benefits, we recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services:</p> <p>A. record the name and address of health-care professionals who complete disability applications, as</p>                                                                                                                                      | <p>A ministry working group held several meetings between January and February 2020 to brainstorm and plan for activities related to Health Care Practitioners accountability.</p> <p>By September 2020, a ministry working group has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explored options to record the name and address of health-care professionals who complete Disability Determination Packages.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>No outstanding ministry undertaking.</p>                                                                      |

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|       | <p>well as any concerns about these applications identified by adjudicators in its information system, to analyze and identify trends, and take corrective action where needed; and</p> <p>B. review and assess the appropriateness of applications completed by physicians that complete a disproportionately high number of disability applications.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collected data from the Ministry of Health as well as from internal ministry database and performed trend analyses to inform further action required.</li> <li>Assessed the appropriateness of Disability Determination Packages completed by Health Care Providers who complete a disproportionately high number of applications.</li> <li>Developed a plan to address any problems identified.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 7     | <p>So that only applicants who meet the Ontario Disability Support Program's definition of a disabled individual receive benefits, we recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services:</p> <p>A. analyze by disability type the increase in the proportion of cases that it does not assign a medical review, and assess whether these increases are reasonable;</p> <p>B. revisit the actions taken since 2015/16 that contributed to the increase in cases it does not assign a medical review, and take corrective measures where these actions have led to decisions that are not consistent with the ODSP Act;</p> <p>C. review and implement changes to the Adjudication Unit's policies and guidelines where they are not consistent with the</p> | <p>A ministry working group held several meetings between January and February 2020 to plan activities, identify responsibilities and workplans of various sub-groups including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medical Review working group completed an initial brainstorming session</li> <li>Adjudicative practices sub-group completed an initial brainstorming session</li> </ul> <p>By June 2020 the ministry has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessed actions taken since 2015/16 that may have contributed to the increase in cases with no medical review assignment and corrective actions have been identified.</li> <li>Reviewed and updated the ODSP Adjudication Framework to make it align with the ODSP regulation which requires adjudicators to set a medical review date unless the adjudicator is satisfied that the person's condition, impairment and restrictions are not likely to improve.</li> <li>The updated Framework was released to the Disability Adjudication Unit (DAU)</li> </ul> <p>By September 2020 the ministry has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>completed a review and update of adjudicative practices, including requirements for obtaining evidence to support medical review decisions and documenting the rationale.</li> <li>initiated an analysis of the reasonableness of disability type assignments where a medical review is not assigned.</li> </ul> | <p>By December 2020 the ministry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete the analysis of whether disability type assignments are reasonable where a medical review is not assigned.</li> </ul> <p>By March 2021 the ministry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a DAU file review process based on the outcome of the analysis of disability type assignments where a medical review is not assigned.</li> </ul> |

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|       | <p>principles of the Ontario Disability Support Program Act 1997; and</p> <p>D. review and update its requirements for both obtaining evidence in support of medical review decisions and documenting the rationale for such decisions so that they are clearly supported and consistent with the requirements of the ODSP Act.</p>                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                       |
| 8     | <p>So that only eligible individuals are provided with Ontario Disability Support Program income support, we recommend that the Social Benefits Tribunal (Tribunal), while respecting Tribunal member independence:</p> <p>A. review the overturn and uphold rates for reasonableness between Tribunal members and determine whether any changes in training or other tools are needed to foster greater quality; and</p> <p>B. make improvements where needed.</p> | <p><b><u>Response provided by Ministry of Attorney General (MAG):</u></b></p> <p>With all adjudicative tribunals, there is a fundamental principle of independence in decision making. Keeping records of the grant/deny rate of decisions of tribunal members is not in keeping with the fundamental principle of adjudicative independence.</p> <p>The SBT conducts extensive and intensive training for new members as well as monthly training and information sessions led by vice chairs and the legal department on topics necessary for members to know. Extra training may also be provided to individual members as appropriate.</p> <p>Members have the option of consulting with the legal services team at any time, even during a hearing, for legal advice.</p> <p>Decisions are subject to review via our reconsideration process or by an appeal to the Divisional Court.</p> |                                                                                                                                                       |
| 9     | <p>So that only eligible individuals are provided with Ontario Disability Support Program income support, we recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (Ministry):</p> <p>A. review the impact of Ministry attendance on the outcome of Tribunal hearings, to determine whether officers should attend all hearings, or if not, the optimal number of</p>                                                                              | <p>A ministry working group held several meetings between January and February 2020 to plan activities, identify responsibilities and create a workplan for activities related to Case Presenting Officers representation at Tribunal Hearing.</p> <p>The ministry has initiated an assessment of the current approach for ministry Case Presenting Officer attendance at Tribunal hearings and the resulting impact on outcomes.</p> <p>Adjustments to selecting Tribunal hearings to attend are being assessed based on the risk of the Ministry's decision being overturned in the Ministry's absence.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <p>By December 2020 the ministry will complete the assessment of ministry attendance at Tribunal hearings, and then make adjustments accordingly.</p> |

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|       | <p>hearings to attend to minimize overall program costs, and to ensure that the Ministry's position is effectively explained and supported at hearings; and</p> <p>B. select Tribunal hearings to attend based on the risk of the Ministry's decision being overturned in the Ministry's absence.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 10    | <p>So that only eligible individuals are provided with Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) income support, we recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (Ministry):</p> <p>A. review whether the high overturn rate of the Ministry's decisions at the Social Benefits Tribunal has affected the Ministry's ability to reach disability decisions that are consistent with the ODSP Act;</p> <p>B. assess the suitability for ODSP of models for appeals in other jurisdictions and propose alternatives to the Ontario government for an appeals framework that enhances the consistency of disability decisions between the Ministry and the appeals body with the ODSP Act</p> | <p>A ministry working group met to discuss next steps on reviewing the high overturn rate of MCCSS decisions at SBT.</p> <p>Since the audit the ministry has been completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development of a detailed workplan</li> <li>• comprehensive review of provincial, federal and select international appeals frameworks</li> <li>• ask out to select provinces for additional information</li> <li>• development of jurisdictional scan and jurisdictional placement</li> <li>• regularly scheduled meetings of inter-ministerial working group with Ministry of the Attorney General</li> <li>• regularly scheduled meetings of MCCSS working group</li> <li>• briefings and development of related briefing material for Minister's Office and Premier's Office</li> <li>• initial drafting and costing of potential model enhancements.</li> </ul> <p>A ministry working group has initiated the development of an approach to complete an assessment of whether the high overturn rate of the Ministry's decisions at the Social Benefits Tribunal has affected the Ministry's ability to reach disability decisions that are consistent with the ODSP Act.</p> <p>The government is unveiling plans to build a more responsive, efficient and person-centred social assistance system.</p> <p>As part of the first-phase of the social assistance recovery and renewal plan the province will be focusing on improved access to employment and training services, developing new digital tools and modern service options, and ways to process financial assistance faster.</p> <p>The first phase of the social plan to roll, to roll out over the next few months, is focused on:</p> | <p>By March 2021, the ministry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• complete an assessment to determine whether the high overturn rate of the Ministry's decisions at the Social Benefits Tribunal has affected the Ministry's ability to reach disability decisions that are consistent with the ODSP Act.</li> </ul> |

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|       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving access to employment and training services for social assistance clients, including people with disabilities.</li> <li>New digital tools and service modernization, with an easy-to-use online application.</li> <li>A centralized intake process that reduces paperwork, giving caseworkers more time to support clients through crisis and helping them get back to work.</li> <li>Making financial assistance processing faster, while strengthening program integrity</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 11    | <p>So that only eligible recipients continue to receive Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits, we recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (Ministry):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. establish a risk-based timeframe for ODSP caseworkers to periodically review the eligibility of all ODSP recipients;</li> <li>B. implement a process to identify deceased ODSP recipients on a timely basis to prevent overpayments;</li> <li>C. review the backlog of cases that ODSP directives required to be subject to an eligibility verification review over the past four fiscal years, and design and execute a plan to identify and carry out reviews on these cases based on their relative risk;</li> <li>D. review the results of the eligibility verification reviews and carry out a cost-benefit analysis to determine the optimal percentage of eligibility verification reviews the Ministry should complete on an annual basis to</li> </ul> | <p>The ministry has launched an end-to-end review of the Eligibility Verification Process (EVP) which is nearing completion to identify opportunities to streamline the EVP review process in order to complete more.</p> <p>The ministry has implemented a regular process to identify deceased ODSP recipients on a semi-annually basis in 2020. A data match was run in December 2019 and the on-going first iteration commenced in June 2020.</p> <p>By March 2020 the ministry has refreshed the EVP case prioritization model to improve the model's performance in identifying high-risk cases for review. This new model was used for September's case selection. Recent onboarding of new resources has commenced to increase capacity.</p> <p>As of August 2020, the EVP backlog has been successfully cleared.</p> | <p>The ministry will develop expectations for staff to make contact with their caseload on a periodic basis, and update and assess eligibility related information according to timeframes that the ministry will set based on the risk characteristics of cases.</p> <p>By January 2021, following the end-to-end EVP process review the ministry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider its recommendations and develop implementation plans for its prioritized solutions.</li> <li>leverage its data collection and analysis of a couple of cycles through the new refreshed case prioritization model, the ministry will assess the optimal number of reviews to be completed.</li> </ul> |

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|       | <p>maximize savings to the program; and</p> <p>E. put in place a plan to complete the number of eligibility verification reviews determined to be optimal to maximize savings to the program.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 12    | <p>To maximize the benefits of the eligibility verification process, we recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services:</p> <p>A. enhance its systems and processes to record and analyze the causes that led to undetected changes in recipients' financial eligibility;</p> <p>B. clearly communicate where such instances are occurring for review by caseworkers; and</p> <p>C. take action to address these causes to minimize their occurrence</p>       | <p>The Ministry continues to enhance its systems and processes related to its Eligibility Verification Process (EVP) reviews to record and analyze the causes that led to unreported changes in eligibility.</p> <p>The EVP results tab of SAMS has been fixed and enhanced. It now enables the system to capture changes in eligibility (overpayment, underpayment, change in entitlement etc.) that were triggered by updating evidences resulting from an EVP review. However additional enhancements are required to fully capture all outcomes such as Termination / Ineligibility.</p>                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>By June 2021, the Ministry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compile data from SAMS on EVP results and EVP triggered evidence changes and analyze to determine causes of undetected eligibility changes, patterns, and trends</li> <li>• further enhancements to the risk assessment model using the additional intelligence identified</li> <li>• develop business processes and train caseworkers and enhance case management in order to prevent and/or detect early these potential changes in eligibility rather than relying on the EVP process to detect these ineligibilities.</li> </ul> |
| 13    | <p>So that only eligible individuals receive Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits, and that overpayments to recipients are identified and minimized, we recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services take steps to:</p> <p>A. provide training to caseworkers on how to assess and investigate allegations of fraud;</p> <p>B. conduct a review of its process for assessing and investigating allegations of disability fraud and clearly</p> | <p>The ministry has launched an end-to-end review of the fraud complaint process to identify areas of improvement related to Learning and Development, roles and responsibilities, and mechanisms to increase oversight and monitoring.</p> <p>Recommendations to address issues and inefficiencies have been identified and approved. Roles and responsibilities within the revised process are being finalized.</p> <p>The ministry has also undertaken a clean-up of aged allegations and actioned outstanding allegations to local social assistance offices for priority review based on analysis of open fraud allegations in the system.</p> <p>A recommendations report for corrective action was submitted August 2020 to address the allegations backlog.</p> | <p>By March 2021 the Ministry will develop and implement a revised process along with new or updated existing tools and supports (including a Learning and Development Strategy), based on the end-to-end review recommendations.</p> <p>In order to provide improved oversight and ensure completion of investigations, enhanced reports will be monitored post fraud complaint process implementation, to assess the effectiveness of the revised process.</p>                                                                                                                                                      |

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|       | communicate roles and responsibilities; and<br>C. implement a process to monitor whether allegations of fraud have been reviewed and investigated within required time frames and take corrective action where these time frames have not been met.                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 14    | To reduce the number and size of overpayments to recipients, we recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services enhance its systems and processes to determine and record the cause of overpayments, to analyze the root causes and take action to reduce the length of time to identify them, and minimize their occurrence.                                                                                                        | <p>The ministry has launched as part of regular program oversight activities two new data matching activities associated with employment income and deceased individuals.</p> <p>The ministry has also begun the development of a predictive modeling tool that will, using data within the ministry's case management system, identify high risk cases for further review. It is expected that this tool will be operational by March 2021.</p> | <p>In October 2020, the ministry will launch a prototype risk-based eligibility determination model that will use third party data sources to verify the identity and other personal circumstances of social assistance applicants. This risk-based model will be fully launched in March 2021.</p> <p>By early 2021 the ministry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase access to support timely self reporting by clients by expanding MyBenefits functionality to include expense reporting and trustee access (to report to reduce overpayment occurrences.</li> <li>• complete its final stages of validation for the data exchange with Service Canada to streamline the process for accessing federal seniors' benefit programs and reduce the occurrence of overpayments from recipients' transition to these programs.</li> <li>• Develop a new instructor-led course for caseworkers related to overpayment program policies.</li> </ul> |
| 15    | So that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (Ministry) only provides Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) payments to eligible recipients, and overpayments to ineligible individuals are minimized, we recommend that the Ministry carry out medical reviews on a timely basis in accordance with its requirements to determine whether recipients continue to have disabilities that meet the eligibility requirements for ODSP. | <p>A ministry working group held several meetings between January and February 2020 to plan activities, identify responsibilities and plan for activities related to Medical Reviews.</p> <p>The ministry continues to conduct medical reviews on a monthly basis as part of regular business; however, has paused sending new medical review packages as part of the response to the COVID 19 pandemic.</p>                                     | <p>By December 2021, the ministry will complete the backlog of medical reviews.</p> <p>The Ministry will continue eliminating the remaining backlog of medical reviews once it resumes sending medical review packages to recipients. Timelines are dependent on possible second wave of COVID-19.</p> <p>The ministry triages cases in the medical review backlog by conducting a Pre-Notification Review (PNR). That means that cases in the medical review backlog are re-reviewed and the natural progression of medical conditions are assessed to determine whether a medical review is still required.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 16    | To improve the employment outcomes of non-disabled adults on the Ontario Disability Support                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | The ministry has reinforced the requirement that Ontario Works service delivery partners develop strategies to increase the number of ODSP non-disabled adults participating in Ontario Works employment assistance activities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | By October 2020, reports of non-disabled adults not referred to Ontario Works will be sent to local offices for review and action.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

| Rec # | OAGO's Recommendation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | MCCSS Completed Undertaking                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | MCCSS Outstanding Undertaking<br>(including timeline)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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|       | <p>Program (ODSP), we recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. review and update its process for referrals to Ontario Works employment assistance to ensure that all referrals are identified and acted upon on a timely basis;</li> <li>B. implement a process to monitor whether all non-disabled adults have been referred to Ontario Works employment assistance or have a valid waiver in place;</li> <li>C. take corrective action in instances where ODSP offices and their caseworkers are not complying with the requirement to refer non-disabled adults to Ontario Works employment assistance, or ensure that valid waivers are in place; and</li> <li>D. put in place mechanisms to hold Ontario Works service managers accountable in the instances of non-compliance with responsibilities in relation to participation for non-disabled adults on ODSP.</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>In addition, opportunities to update learning and development materials will be reviewed and curriculum will be updated as identified.</p> <p>By June 2021, the ministry will develop a performance monitoring plan and reporting process to track performance against service planning priorities.</p> <p>As part of Employment Services Transformation, a new service delivery model will integrate ODSP and Ontario Works employment services, as well as other government employment services, into Employment Ontario to create a system that is more responsive to the needs of job seekers, businesses and local communities.</p> <p>By January 2021 the new service delivery model for employment services will be implemented in three prototype catchments. Non-disabled adults (NDAs) of an ODSP family unit within the catchments will be referred to EO to receive employment services.</p> <p>Through 2021-22, a transition strategy to review the ODSP NDA caseload will be completed in an effort to refer appropriate level of caseload for employment services or have a valid deferral in place. System functionality will also be implemented in SAMS to support the monitoring and progress of these NDA caseload.</p> <p>Centralized intake, as part of the Recovery and Renewal plan for social assistance, will reduce time spent on administration for municipalities, enabling them to focus capacity in this area.</p> <p>Centralized intake for Ontario Works and centralized benefits for ODSP will be implemented for the EST prototype sites. These efforts will remove administrative work from staff, allowing them to focus on the NDA caseload and ensuring they receive the appropriate referrals or supports, such as referrals to EO for employment services.</p> |
| 17    | <p>So that Ontario Disability Support Program caseworkers can effectively carry out their responsibilities designed to achieve program expectations and requirements, we recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services:</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>Ministry actions as part of the implementation of Employment Services Transformation (EST) in three prototype areas as of April 2020, including workload reduction measures, will continue to support caseworkers in shifting work efforts away from a transactional focus on administering benefits and toward higher-impact case management supports to improve long-term outcomes for clients and life stabilization. Caseworkers will also continue to provide income support while they carry out their responsibilities related to program accountability and integrity such as monitoring eligibility.</p> <p>The ministry announced the first phase of its recovery and renewal plan for social assistance on September 30, 2020, which includes several elements that will</p> | <p>By January 2021, the ministry will have and continue to gradually roll out the following activities to nine ODSP offices within the prototype areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding Electronic Document Management, which streamlines filing and document retention.</li> <li>• Extending the Service Ontario client contact centre pilot</li> <li>• Introducing a new evidence-based service delivery model by rapidly testing a variety of promising methods, such as caseload segmentation or specialized caseloads.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

| Rec # | OAGO's Recommendation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | MCCSS Completed Undertaking                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | MCCSS Outstanding Undertaking<br>(including timeline)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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|       | <p>A. assess workloads and processes to establish a roadmap that clearly identifies the Ministry's intermediate and longer-term actions to improve the ability of caseworkers to handle ODSP cases; and</p> <p>B. implement the actions identified in the roadmap so that program requirements can be met.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>improve the ability of ODSP caseworkers to effectively carry out their responsibilities, including supporting clients with their employment goals. The first phase of the social assistance recovery and renewal plan will roll out over the next few months and will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New digital tools and service modernization with an online application, an expanded MyBenefits digital platform and two-way digital messaging to support client and caseworker communication;</li> <li>• Centralization of initial eligibility for social assistance, beginning with Ontario Works, and centralization of key ODSP health benefits; and</li> <li>• Automated risk-based eligibility assessments to make financial assistance processing faster.</li> </ul> <p>Combined, these key elements will reduce time spent on administration to allow caseworkers more time to support clients through crisis and help those who were working get back to work.</p> <p>Benefits centralization will support Employment Services Transformation (EST) in ODSP prototype offices by reducing the administrative workload of caseworkers to support them in focusing on tasks associated with EST, including high-impact activities with clients such as case management, life stabilization, and employment readiness</p> | <p>Starting in fall/winter 2021-22 the ministry will undertake a follow-up time study in the nine ODSP offices within the prototype areas, including other KPI measurement to assess the impact of the changes in comparison to the baseline results of the time study in July 2018.</p> <p>Lessons learned from the prototype regions may be applied and rolled out across the province in the years ahead.</p> <p>Administration of key ODSP health benefits will be centralized, meaning that for some ODSP sites, benefits applications will be processed by a central team rather than at the local office. The ministry will take a phased approach to centralizing benefits administration, starting in November 2020 with select benefits for nine ODSP offices and expanding to all ODSP offices in January 2021.</p> <p>New features will be added to MyBenefits continuously over the next year.</p> <p>Starting March 31, 2021, the new online application, centralized intake, and risk-based eligibility assessments will begin to roll out in ODSP offices</p> |
| 18    | <p>To better help Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients to increase their economic independence, we recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services:</p> <p>A. periodically provide information on employment supports to all ODSP recipients who can benefit from them;</p> <p>B. assess the disabilities of recipients on the ODSP caseload to determine the proportion and number of recipients who can benefit from participating in employment supports;</p> <p>C. explore options to increase the number of ODSP recipients referred to employment supports to help</p> | <p>As of April 2020, ODSP Employment service providers within the EST catchment areas were transferred over to MLTSD under the new employment Ontario model. This change will consolidate the number of contracts that employment service providers have with the government; service providers in the EST catchment areas who previously held contracts with both ODSP ES and EO will only have one contract moving forward with the service system manager. This will ensure only one payment will be received for the outcomes of SA clients within the EST prototype sites</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>The Common Assessment will be launched as an optional tool for two ODSP offices as of April 2020. The remaining seven ODSP offices in the prototype areas will gain access to tool – in Fall 2020.</p> <p>By October 2020, the ministry will co-design the use and application of the tool to inform the mandatory use of the tool. The ministry will also complete a new Individual Action Plan model and technology.</p> <p>An Employment Service Transformation (EST) evaluation framework is being developed which will observe the success of the prototype areas and allows the ministry to respond and adjust. Impact evaluation will be completed by June 2022.</p> <p>A life stabilization framework is currently being co-designed by MCCSS, MLTSD, Ontario Works Delivery Partners, and ODSP staff. Once the framework is in place, targets will be established related to the successful service delivery of the life stabilization services and supports by December 2020.</p>                                                                                |

| Rec # | OAGO's Recommendation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | MCCSS Completed Undertaking | MCCSS Outstanding Undertaking<br>(including timeline)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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|       | <p>increase the proportion of recipients who become more economically independent;</p> <p>D. track additional information from employment support service providers on employment outcomes, monitor whether recipients obtain long-term employment and earn sufficient income to exit from ODSP, and take corrective action where outcomes do not meet Ministry expectations;</p> <p>E. review the services provided by employment support service providers to determine whether they are meeting recipients' needs and assess and take steps to ensure they provide value for money;</p> <p>F. obtain data from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to identify individuals who have been provided similar employment support services by both Employment Ontario service providers and ODSP service providers, and take action to recover payments where two service providers have been paid for the same job placement;</p> <p>G. Work with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to put in place processes that prevent payment to two different service providers for the same employment outcomes.</p> |                             | <p>MCCSS is working with MLTSD to transform the provinces employment services. Sessions will be created for front line staff by March 2021 to help frontline staff make appropriate referrals to Employment Ontario.</p> <p>Effective January 1, 2021 the common assessment tool will be used by all nine ODSP offices within the EST catchment areas. The tool is mandatory for referrals to EO however MCCSS will also be encouraging the tool to ODSP recipients to help determine life stabilization needs and support discussions around employment services. Action Plan functionality will also be implemented in SAMS to support the monitoring of recipients' goals, barriers and referrals.</p> <p>Further, Ontario will be releasing the Poverty Reduction Strategy 2020-2025 in the coming months, which is a whole of government strategy to reduce poverty and support employment. Based on feedback from public consultations and the economic impact of COVID-19, the strategy is anticipated to include initiatives across MCCSS and other partner ministries including MLTSD and MCU to address poverty and support social assistance clients in achieving greater financial independence including through employment and training supports.</p> |

| Rec # | OAGO's Recommendation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | MCCSS Completed Undertaking | MCCSS Outstanding Undertaking<br>(including timeline)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| 19    | <p>To measure and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) for those using its supports and services, and to increase accountability of the program to Ontario taxpayers, we recommend that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. design and implement performance indicators and related targets for intended program and recipient outcomes;</li><li>B. implement a process to monitor the performance of the program against these indicators and targets and take corrective action where targets are not being met; and</li><li>C. report publicly on the effectiveness of ODSP.</li></ul> |                             | <p>The ministry will implement an outcomes framework that establishes clear expectations and targets for Ontario Works and ODSP recipients by March 2022.</p> <p>By March 2023, the ministry will begin monitoring program performance and the outcome framework targets and will take action where targets are not met.</p> <p>The ministry will also establish a timeline and process to begin public reporting on the effectiveness of the ODSP program.</p> |