

YOUR ACCESS POINT FOR adult developmental **SERVICES**



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Understanding Developmental Services Ontario (DSO)



What is DSO?

Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) is the access point for adult developmental services funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) in Ontario.

DSO helps connect adults with developmental disabilities to available ministry-funded services and community-based supports that promote independence and engagement. There are nine DSO locations across the province.

Once confirmed eligible, your area DSO will help you:

- Understand and complete the application process.
- Determine the kind of services and supports you need.
- Get access to MCCSS-funded services and supports that you need when a spot is available.
- Find relevant information and resources in your community.

What is a developmental disability?

A developmental disability:

- is present at birth
- or develops before 18 years of age
- affects a person's ability to learn and is permanent (can be mild or severe)

When should I apply?

When you turn 16, apply online or contact your area DSO to see if you are eligible for services. By starting the application process early, you may be able to reduce the service gap between children and adult services. DSO will help you determine the supports that are available in your area and that meet your needs after you turn 18.

Update your information

It may take some time before you get your services and supports. In the meantime, it is important to keep your area DSO up to date about any changes in your situation. Contact us if you are planning to move or change your phone number. This helps us to make sure that we have your current contact information and to confirm that you wish to remain in the service registry.

How to apply?

Call your area DSO and complete the initial referral with a Service Navigator or go through the online application on dsontario.ca. The referrals can be made once the person is 16 years old, but services cannot begin until after they turn 18 years old.

Finding your area DSO

DSO Central East Region

Serves Durham, Haliburton, Kawartha Lakes, Northumberland, Peterborough, Simcoe, and York.
1-855-277-2121
TTY 905-898-1609

DSO Central West Region

Serves Dufferin, Halton, Peel, Waterloo, and Wellington.
1-888-941-1121
TTY available through Bell Relay*

DSO Eastern Region

Serves Ottawa Region, Prescott-Russell, Renfrew, Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry.
1-855-376-3737
TTY 1-855-777-5787

DSO Hamilton-Niagara Region

Serves Brant, Haldimand-Norfolk, Hamilton, and Niagara.
1-877-376-4674
TTY available through Bell Relay*

DSO North East Region

Serves Cochrane, Muskoka, Nipissing, Parry Sound, and Timiskaming.
1-855-376-6376
TTY 1-800-855-0511

DSO Northern Region

Serves Algoma, Kenora, Manitoulin, Rainy River, Sudbury, and Thunder Bay.
1-855-376-6673
TTY 1-866-752-5427

DSO South East Region

Serves Frontenac, Hastings, Lanark, Leeds & Grenville, Lennox & Addington, and Prince Edward.
1-855-237-6737

DSO South West Region

Serves Bruce, Chatham-Kent, Elgin, Essex, Grey, Huron, Lambton, Middlesex, Oxford, and Perth.
1-855-437-6797
TTY available through Bell Relay*

DSO Toronto Region

Serves Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, and Toronto.
1-855-372-3858
TTY 416-925-0295

*Call Bell Relay by dialling 711, enter your area DSO number, type GA and Bell Relay will connect you

Visit dsontario.ca to connect with your area DSO online.

What happens to my services when I turn 18?



When you turn 18, you are considered to be an adult. Children's services such as Special Services at Home, Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities or services through the Ontario Autism Program end. You must apply to DSO to see if you are eligible for adult developmental services.

Why apply early at 16?

To reduce the service gap between children and adult services, you should start the process early and apply at age 16. With all of the correct documents, you can be confirmed eligible for adult developmental services at age 16, however, the services will not start until after age 18.

Transition planning

A transition plan is your opportunity to plan for your future.

Who can help with your transition?

You can select someone from your:

- family
- school
- community agency, and/or a
- respite worker

Your role

- Have a voice, your opinion matters.
- Be involved as much as possible.
- Think about your goals for the transition and your future.

Your parent/caregiver

- Helps to develop your goals during the transition.
- Helps to advocate for you, making sure your voice is heard.

How do you prepare?

- Think about your upcoming transition.
- Identify who can help you in the process.
- Choose a lead (you, a professional, or a person you trust and rely on).
- Make sure you have the required documents for the application process.

Making the transition

Step 1: Get your eligibility documents ready.

Step 2: Apply online or call your area DSO when you turn 16 to see if you are eligible for services.

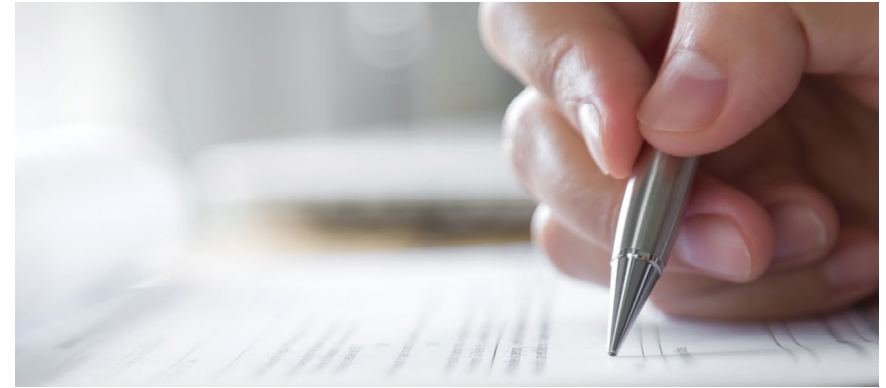
Step 3: Complete an application package and get connected to available services.

Step 4: Stay in touch so we can keep your file updated.

Some of the services that may be available to you include:

- specialized supports
- Passport program
- housing supports
- community participation supports, and
- caregiver respite supports

The application process



Step 1: Get your eligibility documents ready

What types of documents do I need to provide to prove this?

You must provide DSO with one document for each of the following areas listed below:

1. Your developmental disability

To prove that you have a developmental disability, you will need a written psychological assessment. It must be done by a psychologist or psychological associate. If you do not have a psychological assessment, please contact your area DSO. They will review options with you.

The assessment must include the following elements:

a. Information about your cognitive functioning

This means your ability to reason, organize, plan, make judgments, and identify consequences. It is usually done as an IQ test.

b. Adaptive information

This means your capacity to gain independence and apply skills in everyday life. It includes the following set of skills:

- Conceptual skills, such as reading, writing, math and money skills.
- Social skills, such as getting along with others.
- Practical skills that you use every day, such as work skills, getting around and using transportation, taking care of your health and safety, following schedules and routines.

c. Age of onset information

If you get the assessment done after you turn 18, the psychologist should say if your disability began before the age of 18 and is likely to continue all of your life. If you get it done before you turn 18, no information is needed about age of onset.

2. Living in Ontario

- Ontario photo card or other government-issued photo ID
- lease or rental agreement
- statement of direct deposit for ODSP
- mailed bank account statements (with your address on them)
- employer record (pay stub or letter from employer on company letterhead) OR
- utility bill

3. Age

- birth or baptismal certificate
- passport
- driver's license
- Ontario health card OR
- proof of Canadian citizenship and/or immigration documents



Step 2: Contact your area DSO

To start the application process, apply online or call your area DSO. If you apply online, someone will contact you from DSO. The person you speak with will ask you questions to see if you are eligible to apply. Make sure you have all the eligibility documents (from Step 1) ready to prove that you:

- have a developmental disability,
- live in Ontario, and
- are 18 years or older.

It will take some time to get through all of the information, so try to set aside up to 30 minutes for your first call. If at any time you need to stop the call, the information you shared is not lost—it is just on hold until you call the DSO back to complete this part of the process.

With all of the correct documents, you can be confirmed eligible for adult developmental services at age 16, although the services will not start until after age 18 when they become available.





Step 3: Once confirmed eligible, complete an application

You will receive a letter from your area DSO telling you if you are eligible to receive MCCSS-funded services. If you are, you will be connected to a DSO assessor in your area. The assessor will set up two meetings with you to help you complete an application package and determine the level of support you need.

Each meeting will be about three hours long and you will need to have at least two people who know you well (e.g., parent, guardian, teacher, etc.) with you at the meetings.

Once the assessor knows your needs, you will be connected to services when they become available in your area.



Step 4: Stay in touch

It may take some time before you get your services and supports. In the meantime, contact your area DSO if any of your information or situation changes.

For example, call us if you are planning to move or change your phone number. This helps us to make sure that we have your current contact information and to confirm that you wish to remain in the service registry.

If eligible, next steps with DSO

Once you are confirmed eligible, here are your next steps with DSO:

- ✓ **Ask** for a referral to the Passport program.
- ✓ You may also be eligible for Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). **Apply** for ODSP (as early as 17.5 years) using your official DSO eligibility letter.
- ✓ **Get connected** to MCCSS-funded services and supports when they become available, and receive information about other community resources.
- ✓ **Connect** with Housing Navigators. They can help learn about individualized housing options, as an alternative to MCCSS-funded supportive housing.
- ✓ **Learn** about third-party service providers that can provide supports to adults with developmental disabilities and their families.
- ✓ **Sign up** for the DSO Newsletter to learn of upcoming DSO events, webcasts, and webinars.
- ✓ **Follow** DSO on Facebook and Instagram. You can also join your area DSO Facebook group to stay up to date on important information.

Understanding Supports



Specialized supports

Specialized supports are provided by local agencies and funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS). Some of the types of specialized services and supports that may be available to you include:

Adult protective service worker (APSW)

An APSW can meet regularly with you to help you:

- Learn about community supports and ministry-funded services.
- Identify your strengths and needs.
- Stay informed about supports and direct you to the ones you need.
- Develop problem-solving and life skills, like budgeting and learning to use public transportation.

In some communities, adult protective service workers have different titles, such as service coordinator or adult support worker.

Case management services

A case manager works with you and your family to coordinate formal and informal services and supports to meet your unique goals. These services are often provided on a short-term basis.

Behavioural services

Behavioural consultants can help you by:

- Assessing your ability to be independent and recommend skills for daily life.
- Assisting you in developing and evaluating your behaviour support plan.
- Providing behavioural strategy training to your caregiver and other supports.
- Teaching you support strategies to prevent a crisis.

This service is determined by evaluating your needs and may be provided to you directly or through a group setting.

Person-directed planning

A person-directed plan reviews your individual dreams and goals. With the support of an agency or other support person, a person-directed plan helps you find the tools you need to make it happen.

Creating a person-directed plan will help you:

- Define a vision of your future life.
- Identify your strengths and gifts.
- Set goals and make choices.
- Find ways for you to participate in communities.
- Locate people who can help you achieve your dreams.

Community participation supports

If you are looking to connect to your community through meaningful experiences that promote your personal interests, skills, growth and development, the MCCSS funds local agencies who provide Community Participation Supports.

Agencies can help you participate in the following community activities:

- recreation,
- volunteering,
- life skills, and
- employment opportunities.

Caregiver respite supports

Caregiver respite supports give your primary caregiver(s) a temporary break from their daily routine by providing you with care in different ways. Some caregivers use their Passport funding to choose and pay for their own respite support while others choose to use a respite program where you can stay for a short period of time, either in-home or outside of the home. This can be during the day, evening or weekend.

Passport program

The Passport program is a reimbursement program that helps adults with developmental disabilities participate in their community. If you are eligible for adult developmental services, you would also be eligible for Passport funding.

Passport provides funding for services and supports so you can:

- Take part in community classes or recreational programs.
- Develop work, volunteer, and daily life skills.
- Hire a support worker.
- Create your own life plan (this is called person-directed planning) to reach your goals.
- Get temporary respite for your caregiver(s).

passportfunding.ca

Government financial programs

In addition to services accessed through your area DSO, the following government financial programs may be available to you:

Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)

If you have a disability and need help with your living expenses, you may be eligible for the ODSP Program.

ODSP offers:

- financial assistance to help you and your family pay for essential living expenses.
- health benefits, for you and your family, including prescription drugs and vision care.
- help to find and keep a job, and advance your career.

Contact the MCCSS office in your area for more ODSP information.

ontario.ca/page/ontario-disability-support-program

Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP)

The Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) can help you or your family save for the future. An RDSP can earn interest tax-free until it is taken out of the plan.

The government can make contributions if you have a low or modest family income, regardless of whether or not you contribute financially to your plan. It can also provide grants based on matching contributions from private sources.

The government offers up to \$20,000 in bonds and \$70,000 in grants to eligible individuals.

These government contributions are paid to your RDSP until you become 49 years of age. Any contribution to your RDSP will have no impact on your other federal benefits such as the Canada Child Benefit, the Goods and Services Tax Credit, Old Age Security payments and Employment Insurance. **canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/savings.html**

Housing supports



Housing supports are provided by agencies and funded by the MCCSS. Here are some types of housing supports that may be available in your community:

Group homes and group living supports

- You will live with a few unrelated people.
- Provide you support for up to 24 hours per day.
- Accommodate you based on your needs and abilities.

Supported independent living

- You live more independently.
- Someone helps you with daily activities.
- You receive between 2 to 10 hours of support during the day every week.
- You must be able to be alone overnight and do things like shower or brush your teeth without help.

Host family home/associate living support

- You live with a family who can provide you with care and supports.
- You are encouraged to become an active member of the household.
- You are matched with a family that has similar interests, needs and lifestyle.

Understanding your housing options

A DSO housing navigator in your area can help you understand your housing options by:

- Providing you with resources and organizations that can help you create a housing plan.
- Providing you with a toolkit of resources to help with a housing plan.
- Connecting you with family support networks to share information.
- Supporting innovative approaches and planning for housing, beyond the traditional models available.

The DSO Housing Toolkit

This online toolkit is a library of housing resources put together by DSO staff, with input from people in similar situations, to help you create a housing plan. The toolkit has been organized into 6 steps to make it easier for you to work through the information.

To view the toolkit visit us online at:

dsontario.ca/housing

What other resources are available to me?



While you are waiting for your ministry-funded services to become available, you may also want to research other local community resources, programs and activities. Try connecting with your local recreation centre, private recreation providers, seniors' centres and non-profit organizations that offer a variety of programs and activities for adults with special needs and seniors. Many of these programs are geared to meet the interests and abilities of all participants.

Where to look for a program

Below are some ways to find a recreation program that may meet your needs:

- Look up activities happening at local municipal parks, community and non-profit organizations.
- Find adult continuing education classes and recreation guides.
- Talk to friends and family about what activities are available in your community.
- Search for information fairs and special events in your community.
- If you're a senior, contact your local senior centre.
- Call 211 Helpline Ontario or visit **211ontario.ca**.

Ask yourself these questions to see if the program is right for you.

- What kind of supports will I need to be successful?
- What are some of the activities I have done in the past and enjoyed?
- What have I always wanted to do?
- What are my recreation goals?

Before you sign up for the program, ask the program coordinator these questions to see if the program suits your needs.

- What is the program's philosophy?
- How does the program ensure the safety and security of its participants?

Tips

- Programs fill up quickly so start your search early!
- Attend the program orientation or request to meet the instructor.
- Prepare yourself for the start of the program (buy equipment, supplies, etc.).
- How am I going to get there? (look up transit routes, find shared rides)

DSO website

Don't forget to visit the **dsontario.ca** website for valuable resources including a walk-through the application process, downloadable materials, and access to free webcasts and podcasts.

Need more resources?

Here's a list of some provincial organizations that may be able to help you connect with more local resources.

211 Ontario

Helps you find information about programs and services in your community.

211ontario.ca

Autism Ontario

Helps you find information about autism and the day-to-day issues faced by individuals with autism, their families, and the professionals with whom they interact.

autismontario.com

Community Living Ontario

Helps you and your family to lead the way in advancing inclusion in your lives and community.

communitylivingontario.ca

ConnectABILITY.ca

Helps you find fee-for-service resources in your community.

connectability.ca

IF Library

Helps you learn how to find and use your individualized funding.

iflibrary.ca

Microboards Ontario

A Microboard is a group of committed family and friends who join with a person with a developmental disability to create a supportive not-for-profit corporation.

microboardsontario.com

MyCommunityHub

Allows you to register and pay for activities, classes, programs, workshops, respite and camps offered by developmental service agencies in Ontario. mycommunityhub.ca

Ontario Caregiver Organization

Provides free services and supports for caregivers across Ontario, including counselling, working groups, peer support, online support, and more.

ontariocaregiver.ca

Ontario March of Dimes Strategic Employment Solutions

Provides you with employment opportunities.

marchofdimes.ca

P4P Planning Network

Provides free resources designed to empower you, your family and caregiver(s).

planningnetwork.ca

respiteservices.com

Provides your caregiver(s) with a short break from caregiving so they can take some time off to recharge and reconnect.

respiteservices.com

Special Olympics Ontario

Helps you enrich your life through sport.

specialolympicsontario.com

thehealthline.ca

Helps you find local health and community services.

thehealthline.ca

Need more information?

Call or Text 2-1-1 Helpline (toll-free 1-877-330-3213), to find and connect with your area DSO. To find out more visit, dsontario.ca

Frequently asked questions

1. Who is eligible for developmental services through Developmental Services Ontario (DSO)?

Developmental Services Ontario manages the application process for all provincially-funded supports for adults with a developmental disability in Ontario.

The Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008 defines eligibility for adult developmental services as “significant limitations in cognitive and adaptive functioning determined by a psychologist or psychological associate registered with the College of Psychologists of Ontario or equivalent body in another province”.

2. Does DSO offer adult developmental services?

No. DSO does not deliver any services, it is the access point for Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) funded adult developmental services and supports. You must apply through DSO to see if you are eligible to receive services.

3. If you are eligible for services, DSO will refer you to available services in your area, like the Passport program.

To be eligible a person must have a psychological documentation that confirms they meet the cognitive, adaptive, and age of onset criteria. This is determined by a psychologist or psychological associate registered with the College of Psychologists of Ontario or equivalent body in another province.

If you do not have a psychological assessment, talk to your area DSO. They will review options with you.

4. What services can I apply for?

There are many different services offered across the province. Some of the services that may be available in your area include:

- housing supports
- respite for your caregivers
- supports to help you take part in the community
- specialized and clinical supports
- Adult Protective Service Worker Program
- Passport program

5. How do I know if I am eligible for services?

To apply for services, you must prove that you have a developmental disability, live in Ontario, and are 18 years old. You will have to show us different documents to prove this. You must provide a psychological assessment to prove you have a developmental disability. If you do not have a psychological assessment, talk to your area DSO. They will review options with you.

If you are eligible for services, you will receive a letter in the mail confirming your eligibility and you will move onto the next step, completing the application process.

6. I am eligible, what happens next?

Once you receive a letter from DSO telling you if you are eligible to receive MCCSS-funded services, you will be connected to a DSO assessor in your area. The assessor will set up 2 meetings with you to help you complete an application package and determine the level of support you need.

Each meeting will be about 3 hours long and you will need to have at least 2 people who know you well (e.g., parent, guardian, teacher, etc.) with you at the meetings.

Once the assessor knows your needs, you will be connected to services that are available in your area.

7. I am eligible, but only 16 years old, will I get services now?

No, you can only access services when you turn 18. However, starting early will help to speed up the process and help connect you to services so that after you turn 18 you will be linked to available services in your area.

8. Can I apply for Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) through DSO?

No, it is a different process to apply for ODSP. However, if you are under 18 you can use the DSO eligibility letter as part of your application for income support with the ODSP.

Contact the MCCSS office in your area for more ODSP information.

9. What happens if I am not eligible for services?

If you are not eligible, you will have the option to request a review of the decision. DSO will make every effort to provide you with information to assist you in finding other resources.

10. Is there a waiting time between when I get my eligibility letter and when I get called by an assessor?

Yes. The wait time between getting your letter and receiving a call from an assessor is different depending on how many people are applying for services and how many assessors are available in your region.

Please be sure to keep your area DSO updated around changes in your circumstances so that they can be as responsive as possible to your situation.

11. Can you send me a copy of the application package to fill out before we meet to save time?

No. A qualified assessor who has been trained through MCCSS will complete the package with you. Information on how to prepare for the package is sent in advance to assist and prepare you for the process.

12. I completed the application package and have been confirmed eligible for services, what happens next?

Once the application package has been completed and DSO confirms your eligibility, you will be linked to supports and services when resources become available.

It may take some time before you get your services and supports. In the meantime, tell your area DSO if any of your information or situation changes.

13. What happens to my information once we complete the application package?

Information from your application package will be entered into a service planning database. This system allows your area DSO contact person to print reports when you want to share them with a service provider and give you a copy if you want one for your records. With your consent, the information collected from the application package will assist DSO to make appropriate linkages to supports and services in your community.

14. I completed my application packages 6 months ago, why haven't I heard from anyone?

The completion of the application package does not guarantee the start of services. It may take some time before you get your services and supports. At this point, keep DSO updated if there is a change in your current situation. Keeping your area DSO informed will help them prioritize service requests and keep community partners updated.

Still have more questions?

Contact your area DSO.

Explore your area DSO's page on dsontario.ca to find local community resources and programs. Join their Facebook Group for updates, workshops and more.
facebook.com/dsontario/groups



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 **DSO**
Developmental Services Ontario

