

## Important messages

- It is recognized that because of the COVID-19 pandemic, you no longer have the same access to supports to meet your daily needs.
- To address these program limitations that you are currently experiencing, temporary changes are being introduced to help you during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- These temporary changes are effective immediately and will stay in place until further notice by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS). All other aspects of the program, including program guidelines, remain in effect.
- Some of these temporary changes include:
  - o expansion of admissible spending;
  - o easing administrative requirements; and
  - o pre-flowing funding to program recipients.

## Temporary expansion of admissible spending under the Ministry's direct funding programs

### Important messages

- To support your health and well-being while you are physically distancing, admissible Passport spending is being temporarily expanded to accommodate your activities, services and supports that you can buy while at home.
- This temporary expansion to your admissible spending is in effect immediately and will stay like that until further notice by MCCSS.
- All of the programs' admissible/inadmissible spending stays in effect unless stated otherwise in the program guidelines for temporary changes.

## Questions and answers

### Q. Why are these temporary changes being made?

A. These changes are in response to challenges that families of adults with developmental disabilities and children and youth with special needs are facing right now. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, community-based activities and settings are closed so that people stay at home as much as possible and practice physical distancing.

### Q. Why are these changes only temporary?

A. These changes help families of adults with developmental disabilities and children and youth with special needs who are facing to support their loved one at home while community-based activities and settings are closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, these changes will stay in effect only as long as community restrictions are in place.

### Q. What expenses can I temporarily include in the program's admissible spending?

A. Some of the expenses may include:

- sensory products;
- technology products that support e-learning and other activities;
- activities and products that support home-based recreation and fitness activities that are usually accessed through day programs and other community-based programs;
- supplies that support home-based physical activity and fitness;
- personal protective equipment and supplies, when available;
- essential service delivery fees; and
- behavioural support plans and related interventions.

**Q. When will I be able to use these temporary changes? And for how long?**

**A. The temporary changes are effective as of April 2020 and will stay in effect until further notice from the MCCSS.**

**Q. A yearly membership for Xbox Live, Disney+, PlayStation etc. costs less than a monthly membership, can I purchase the yearly membership?**

**A. Yes, you can purchase a yearly membership during this time. However, once the government restrictions are lifted and the program transitions are back to standard program requirements, these purchases will not be reimbursed. You will be given as much notice as possible to prepare you for the return to business as usual.**

**Note: Cancellation fees and/or renewal fees will not be reimbursed.**

**Q. What does ‘home-based’ activities mean and why is it limited to recreation or physical activity/fitness programs?**

**A. ‘Home-based’ means recreational or fitness activities/equipment that can take place within your home or backyard (e.g., yoga mat, basketball net, badminton set, etc.). This limit is in place to support the government and public health recommendations for people to remain physically active while staying at home and practice physical distancing.**

**Q. Why is the funding only covering the ‘delivery fees’ of essential services?**

**A. The government recognizes that some people with disabilities and their families may be unable to easily leave their homes for groceries and pharmacy needs. To support households in this situation, delivery/service fees associated with groceries or medication are considered a temporary eligible expense.**

**Note: This temporary change does not include the cost of groceries or medicine. Service/delivery fees for prepared food (e.g., take out) are also not included.**

# Temporary easing of administrative requirements for Passport

## Important messages

- To reduce the administrative burden caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, temporary changes to the Passport program's signature requirements and submission deadlines on claim forms and invoices have been put in place effective immediately.

## Questions and answers

Q. How do the temporary changes affect the program signature requirements?

A. Due to physical distancing many individuals/families may not have access to technology to support an e-signature process, the signature requirements for invoice and claim forms are being temporarily waived until further notice. This includes support worker signatures to confirm that a service was provided.

Q. What changes are being made to the invoice/claim submission deadlines?

A. To help families and individuals who are facing challenges submitting their 2019/20 claims, the programs' year-end claim submission deadline has been waived. You can submit your 2019/20 claims at any time and will be reimbursed for admissible claims from your 2019/20 allocations.

Q. Will I still get reimbursed if I submit my 2019/20 claims after the claim submission deadline?

A. Yes. In order to help families and individuals who are facing challenges submitting their 2019/20 claims, the programs' year-end claim submission deadline has been waived. You can submit your 2019/20 claims at any time and will be reimbursed for admissible claims from your 2019/20 allocations.

**Q. My support worker, or another 3rd party, cannot sign my invoice. Can I submit my invoice without a support worker signature?**

**A. Yes, the program will temporarily accept invoices and claims that, in some cases may not include a support worker signature. However, in such cases individuals must still submit the name and contact information of the support worker on the claim.**

**Q. I am continuing to work with my support worker but not in person. My support worker connects with me virtually to offer me support. Can I claim this as an admissible expense?**

**A. Yes. Individuals, who continue to receive eligible services from their support worker virtually via telephone and/or video conferencing, are receiving acceptable support options that are eligible for reimbursement.**

## **Funding of up to \$1,000 for 2019/20 spending for Passport**

### **Important messages**

- **The government is making temporary changes to how individuals access their direct funding and the timeframes for claim submissions. This will help ease the financial challenges for those who have not been able to submit 2019/20 claims or receive 2019/20 reimbursements for admissible spending due to the impacts of COVID-19.**

## Questions and answers

**Q. I received a cheque/automatic deposit but did not submit a claim for reimbursement. What is this payment for?**

A. The Ministry acknowledges that if you manually submit your invoices to your local Passport agency you are likely to experience delays in receiving your reimbursements. Passport agencies are also practicing physical distancing and therefore are unable to access/open mail to process claims. Your unspent funds available in your 2019/20 funding approval will receive an automatic payment of up to \$1,000 of your remaining budget to help ease any financial challenges during this time.

**Note:** This is an advance payment of recipients' 2019/20 funding and should only be used for admissible expenses from April 1, 2019 through to March 31, 2020. This funding may not be applied to expenses that were made before or after those dates.

**Q. As a recipient of this funding, am I still expected to submit claims for this amount?**

A. This funding will be based on your actual invoices to ensure that you are not funded for more than your 2019/20 allocation. You should keep your invoices for future reference.

**Q. I have more than \$1000 in outstanding claims for Passport, can I get an additional advance of my 2019/20 funding as the Passport agency is dealing with delays in reimbursements?**

A. If you have more than \$1,000 in outstanding claims for the 2019/20 fiscal year and would like to request an additional advance of your 2019/20 funding due to financial hardship, please contact your Passport agency to request an additional advance. You will be required to keep your invoices and receipts to reconcile with the additional advance of 2019/20 funding.

**Q. I have \$1,000 left over from 2019/20, why did I not receive an advance payment?**

**A. If you were in receipt of funding in 2019/20 and have unspent funding remaining in your 2019/20 budget, then you are eligible to receive an advance payment. The advance payment was made to all individuals who self-administer all or a portion of their funding and who have submitted a claim in 2019/20. If you have not received a payment and if you self-administer your funding, please contact your local regional office or Passport agency to discuss your situation.**

**Q. Can I use funding from 2019/20 to purchase goods and services in 2020/21?**

**A. No. 2019/20 funding can only be used to cover expenses from April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020. This funding is not to be used for expenses that were made before or after those dates. The Ministry acknowledges that individuals who manually submit their invoices to their local Passport agency are experiencing delayed reimbursements due to agencies offices being closed and unable to access/open mail to process. This funding is to help ease any financial challenges during this time.**

## **2020/21 funding allocations for Passport**

### **Important messages**

- To support individuals and families while staying at home and practicing physical distancing, the Ministry will be flowing funding to program recipients in advance for Q1 (April to June) of 2020. This will ensure families have immediate access to direct funding to purchase services and supports, without waiting to be reimbursed for a claim. Funding will be allocated based on a prorated calculation of a program recipient's approved annual funding amount for the period covering April to June 2020.**

## Questions and answers

Q. Why is the advance payment of Q1 (April to June) funding being made available?

A. To provide individuals and families with immediate financial assistance to buy services and supports without waiting to be reimbursed for their eligible claims, individuals in the programs will receive an advance payment equal to one quarter of their annual, self-administered funding amount for the period of April to June 2020.

Q. I did not receive my first quarter advance payment for the 2020/21 year. What do I do?

A. If you self administer all or a portion of your funding and have submitted a claim in 2019/20, you will be provided a payment for the first quarter of the 2020/21 fiscal year. If you are eligible to receive 2020/21 program funding and self-administer your funding but have not submitted a claim for 2019/20 or if you have your funding administered by an agency, please contact your local Passport agency to inquire about your particular circumstances.

Q. I just got an advance payment of my program funding, is this extra money?

A. No, this is an advance payment of a portion of your approved program funding to help ease any financial challenges so that you have immediate access to your direct funding to purchase services and supports, without waiting to be reimbursed for your eligible claims. If you are receiving advance payments, you are required to keep receipts/invoices to reconcile your actual expenses against your advance payment. You are encouraged to continue to submit claims for these expenses so that your remaining program budget amount is up to date as your funding advances will be reconciled based on the actual invoices submitted.

## More questions and answers

**Q. Do I have to continue to pay an agency to hold my day program space during this time even though I am not receiving service?**

**A.** You have the choice and flexibility to use your annual funding within the parameters of the program(s) under which you are a recipient, in ways that meet your needs, but extra funding will not be made available. You must balance current support needs and expenses against those services and supports that you may need through the remainder of the fiscal year.

**Q. What assistance is available to support agencies in maintaining staff and support during the COVID-19 pandemic? Is support available for independent support workers?**

**A.** The Government of Canada is taking immediate action to support Canadians and businesses facing hardship as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic. There may be support for individuals and families facing loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There may also be support for businesses to avoid layoffs and support rehiring employees.

For more information, please visit the Government of Canada's website at:  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html>

- Learn about how the Government is supporting people, businesses and families during COVID-19 by visiting [www.ontario.ca/coronavirus](http://www.ontario.ca/coronavirus)

## Passport questions

**Q. Which professional and specialized services and supports are temporarily admissible and do not need prior approval from my Passport agency?**

**A.** The supports you can use your Passport funding to pay for to help support a family member more safely at home include development of a behavioural support plan from a professional and/or specialized service provider. Interventions and strategies (i.e., to help reduce or manage challenging behaviours) that are recommended in the support plan will be admissible without prior approval.

**Note:** Professional and specialized services and supports that are not linked to a behavioural support plan, such as physio, occupational and speech therapies, etc., continue to be inadmissible under the Passport program. Inadmissible expenses as outlined in the Passport guidelines remain in effect but may still be approved under the guidelines' extenuating circumstances clause on a case-by-case basis.

**Q. Why can I not use my Passport funding for physiotherapy and occupational therapy? They are part of my support plan.**

**A.** The Ministry recognizes that without access to community supports, people and families are adjusting to the new reality of finding ways to receive support at home. Physical and occupational therapies along with other professional services continue to be inadmissible under the Passport program. Inadmissible expenses, as outlined in the Passport guidelines, remain in effect but may still be approved under the guidelines' extenuating circumstances clause, on a case-by-case basis.

**Q. I am a new Passport recipient but have not been able to sign my Passport service agreement because my Passport agency is closed. What do I do?**

**A.** Please connect with your local Passport agency to discuss possible options.

**Q. I am in a crisis situation as my circumstances have changed and require more Passport funding/supports? What do I do?**

**A. If you are in crisis relating to funding/supports, please contact your local Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) office. The DSO office is best positioned to determine what the appropriate next steps are. Those in receipt of Passport funding who are experiencing financial hardship and cannot pay for supports up front, should contact your local Passport agency to request a funding advance for admissible supports and expenses. Any advanced funds received will be reconciled against your actual spending.**

**Q. What happens if I use all my Passport funding during this time? Will I get more funding when emergency restrictions are eventually lifted?**

**A. You have the choice and flexibility, within the parameters of the program guidelines, regarding how you use your annual funding amount, including how you would be best supported during the COVID-19 pandemic. You will need to stay within your total annual funding amount for the 2020/21 fiscal year as additional Passport funding will not be made available. You must balance your current needs against what you may need for the remainder of the fiscal year.**

## **Need more information?**

To find out more about temporary changes to Passport funding, contact your local Passport agency, or visit [www.dsontario.ca/passport-program](http://www.dsontario.ca/passport-program) for latest updates.

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