

Request for Decision

Social Services Discretionary Policy Update

Presented To: Community Services Committee

Presented: Monday, Jan 15, 2018

Report Date Thursday, Dec 21, 2017

Type: Managers' Reports

Resolution

THAT the City of Greater Sudbury approves revisions to the Social Services Discretionary Benefits Budget policy as outlined in the report entitled "Social Services Discretionary Policy Update" from the General Manager of Community Development presented at the Community Services meeting on January 15, 2018.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan / Health Impact Assessment

This report refers to operational matters.

The changes outlined in the report will allow for greater flexibility to meet individual needs of the client and will have a positive impact on the health and wellness of the social assistance recipient. Furthermore, the expected changes in frequency for the existing service level are not expected to have any effect on social assistance recipients due to implementing flexibility in the Discretionary Policy.

In addition, this initiative aims to improve the quality of life and place for citizens of Greater Sudbury as it will promote Population Health in areas of Investing in Families, Enabling and Promoting Mental Health, Improving Access to Housing, and Encouraging Holistic Health.

Report Summary

On July 10, 2017 a report was presented to the Community Services Committee regarding the Social Services Discretionary Benefits Policy.

The report was approved by City Council which increased the budget for Discretionary Benefits by \$350,000 effective January 1st, 2018. The Community Services Committee further directed staff to return

Signed By

Report Prepared By

Teresa Cirillo
Supervisor of Administration
Digitally Signed Dec 21, 17

Health Impact Review

Teresa Cirillo
Supervisor of Administration
Digitally Signed Dec 21, 17

Manager Review

Teresa Cirillo
Supervisor of Administration
Digitally Signed Dec 21, 17

Division Review

Tyler Campbell
Director of Social Services
Digitally Signed Dec 21, 17

Financial Implications

Apryl Lukezic
Co-ordinator of Budgets
Digitally Signed Dec 21, 17

Recommended by the Department

Catherine Matheson
General Manager of Community Development
Digitally Signed Dec 21, 17

Recommended by the C.A.O.

Ed Archer
Chief Administrative Officer
Digitally Signed Dec 22, 17

with a report that reviewed the current service level while balancing individual needs of the client based on the social determinants of health.

This report outlines changes to service levels and updates the Discretionary Benefits policy to meet individual client needs.

Financial Implications

City Council approved an increase in the Social Services Discretionary Benefits Budget in the amount of \$350,000 for the 2018 budget year. The changes outlined in this report are expected to reduce the current service level to fit within the increased budget amount as the expected deficit for 2017 is approximately \$380,000. The report also seeks changes to the policy so that Social Services will have more flexibility to address individual client needs.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) is currently reviewing a report entitled "Income Security: A Roadmap for Change". This report is recommending that MCSS make changes to the current Provincial policy on discretionary benefits that may lead to savings to the Municipality if funerals become a mandatory benefit. The Community Services Committee will be apprised of any possible changes.

Background

On July 10, 2017, a report was presented to the Community Services Committee regarding the Social Services Discretionary Benefits Policy, increasing the budget for Discretionary Benefits by \$350,000 effective January 1, 2018.

<https://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=agenda&action=navigator&id=1203&itemid=13497&lang=en>

The Community Services Committee further directed staff to return with a report that reviewed the current service level while balancing individual needs of the client based on the social determinants of health. This report outlines changes to service levels and updates the Discretionary Benefits Policy to meet individual client needs.

Service Standard

Following the review of the Discretionary Benefits Policy, it has been determined that all items funded through this benefit are required to support low-income families in meeting their health and housing needs.

The year-end deficit for the 2017 Discretionary Benefits Budget is projected to be approximately \$380,000. Therefore, adjustments to the policy are needed in order to balance the enhanced budget approved for 2018.

Based on a review of other Social Assistance offices in Ontario, Greater Sudbury provides greater benefits in many areas. Therefore, it is recommended that changes regarding frequency of some benefits will be decreased (Appendix 1 – Discretionary Rate Chart) to be parallel with province wide standards. It is expected that changes to frequencies for appliances and beds will not have an adverse effect on clients if Social Services have discretion to issue the benefit earlier based on individual needs. An example of early issuance for a bed or appliance would be due to an exceptional circumstance such as a flood or fire.

As discussed in the July report with the Community Services Committee, Greater Sudbury also provides a greater benefit than other Social Assistance offices in Ontario in the area of orthodontic treatment. As such, it is further recommended that an adjudication process be created in order to ensure that orthodontic treatment is provided to those most in need and that all other options are properly explored before approving treatments that are submitted by Orthodontists. An adjudication process that is intended to balance the needs of the clients while not creating additional barriers to access is currently being reviewed. The new process will be finalized before approving any orthodontic claims in 2018.

Discretion Based on Individual Need

Greater Sudbury provides greater discretionary benefits in many areas; however, there are a limited number of requests that fall outside of the current policy that would have a positive impact on the health and well-being of clients. A change in policy would allow for this type of benefit to be paid in exceptional circumstances, and it will give Social Services the ability to provide a high impact benefit to clients, which is in line with the modernization efforts that have been outlined by the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Social Services finance staff will continue to monitor the Discretionary Benefits budget on a monthly basis to ensure that the budget is in line with the increased budget approved by Council for January 1, 2018. Further updates will be brought to the Community Services Committee if demand increases for discretionary items thus affecting the approved budget.

Next Steps

Upon approval of City Council, Social Services will revise the rate chart effective January 1, 2018 and an adjudication process will be implemented to adjudicate orthodontic claims. The Social Services Division will create a new process to deal with the small number of claims that fall outside of the current policy that relies on Supervisory discretion and approval.

Resources: Income Security: A Roadmap for Change
https://files.ontario.ca/income_security_-_a_roadmap_for_change-english-accessible_updated.pdf

Appendix 1 - Discretionary Rate Chart

Item	Previous (Effective 2014)		Revise (Effective 2018)	
	Amount (up to)	Frequency	Amount (up to)	Frequency
Hearing Aids & Personal FM Systems	\$1,000 per ear	Every 5 years	\$1,000 per ear	Every 5 years
Mastectomy Supplies	\$300	As required	\$300	As required
Orthopedic (Orthotics)	\$500	Every 3 years	\$500	Every 3 years
Mobility Device Repairs	\$500	Every 2 years	\$500	Every 2 years
Splints - specialized splints not covered by OHIP	As per estimate	As required	As per estimate	As required
Support/Compression Stockings	\$250	In a 12 month period	\$250	In a 12 month period
Lice Treatments	As per estimate	As required	As per estimate	As required
Moving & Storage				
Moving (Singles/Couples)	\$200	Every 2 years	\$200	Every 2 years
Moving (Families with Children)	\$400	Every 2 years	\$400	Every 2 years
Storage	\$200	Every 12 months	\$200	Every 12 months
Appliances				
Refrigerator	\$450	Every 5 years	\$450	Every 10 years
Stove	\$400	Every 5 years	\$400	Every 10 years
Washer	\$400	Every 5 years	\$400	Every 10 years
Dryer	\$400	Every 5 years	\$400	Every 10 years
Appliance Repairs For Refrigerator, Stove, Washer or Dryer	\$200	Once in a 12 month period/appliance	\$200	Once in a 12 month period/appliance
Repair Estimate (for above items)	\$30	Once in a 12 month period/appliance	\$30	Once in a 12 month period/appliance
Beds				
Twin Complete Bed	\$350	Every 5 years	\$350	Every 10 years
Twin Mattress Only	\$250	Every 5 years	\$250	Every 10 years
Twin Boxspring	\$100	Every 5 years	\$100	Every 10 years
Double Complete Bed	\$400	Every 5 years	\$400	Every 10 years
Double Mattress Only	\$300	Every 5 years	\$300	Every 10 years
Double Boxspring	\$100	Every 5 years	\$100	Every 10 years
Bunkbeds	\$700	Every 5 years	\$700	Every 10 years
Sofa bed/futon (in lieu of bed)	\$300	Every 5 years	\$300	Every 10 years
Bed Bug Mattress Cover	\$150	Every 5 years	\$150	Every 10 years
Cribs				
Complete Crib Set (New and CSA Safety Approved)	\$350	Once per child	\$350	Once per child
Crib Only (New and CSA Safety Approved)	\$250	Once per child	\$250	Once per child
Mattress Only	\$100	Once per child	\$100	Once per child