

1. Why is the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) phasing out the paper drug eligibility card currently provided to social assistance recipients on a monthly basis?

MCSS's current priorities include streamlining service delivery to reduce administrative costs, create efficiencies, minimize the use of paper and improve client service through new benefit delivery mechanisms for social assistance clients.

This initiative is one way MCSS is making improvements by enabling social assistance recipients to use their Ontario health card instead of a paper drug eligibility card to access drugs covered under the Ontario Drug Benefit program.

2. When will the paper drug eligibility card be phased out?

Starting December 1st, 2016, social assistance clients who have a valid Ontario health card will no longer receive a paper drug eligibility card.

This change will apply to all recipients of the:

- Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)*, which includes Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD)
- Ontario Works Program (OW)*, which includes Temporary Care Assistance (TCA)

* This includes First Nation clients who receive benefits from ODSP and M'Chigeeng First Nation.

Note: There is no change for clients served by First Nations Ontario Works Administrators who do not use the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS). They will continue to receive monthly paper drug eligibility cards until further notice.

Clients who are not eligible for an Ontario health card will continue to receive a paper drug eligibility card until they obtain an Ontario health card.

3. In the absence of a paper drug eligibility card, how can optometrists and physicians confirm a client's social assistance eligibility to ensure they receive payment for their services?

Optometrists and physicians can accept other forms of proof of eligibility, such as the client's monthly Statement of Assistance (SOA) to confirm eligibility for coverage for a periodic oculo-visual assessment (POVA). If the client does not provide proof of eligibility, the optometrist or physician can confirm a client's social assistance eligibility by calling the Social Assistance Verification Helpline at 1-888-284-3928.


Some clients will continue to receive a paper drug eligibility card if they are not eligible for an Ontario health card, including:

- clients who are not eligible for a valid Ontario health card and
- clients who are served by First Nations Ontario Works Administrators who do not use the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS).

4. What are the hours of operation of the Social Assistance Verification (SAV) Helpline?

The SAV Helpline will be available Monday to Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. (excluding statutory holidays).

*The hours of operation are based on the availability of the social assistance technology. The social assistance technology may also be periodically unavailable for a limited time, during business hours, for maintenance. Notices will be broadcast via the SAV Helpline.



Paperless Drug Card Q&As for Optometrists and Physiotherapists

5. When should an optometrist or physician call the SAV Helpline to confirm a social assistance client's eligibility?

Optometrist or physician should contact the SAV Helpline to confirm a social assistance client's eligibility within the calendar month of the client's POVA.

6. If a client presents a valid paper drug card or other proof of social assistance eligibility for the month in question, are optometrists and physician required to contact the SAV Helpline to verify the client's social assistance eligibility?

No. If the client presents a valid paper drug eligibility card or other proof of social assistance eligibility (e.g. SOA), for the month in question, optometrists and physicians are not required to call the SAV Helpline to confirm the client's eligibility for services.

Some clients will continue to receive a paper drug card.

7. What should optometrists and physicians do if they are unable to verify a client's social assistance eligibility through the SAV Helpline?

If a client requires service and the optometrist or physician is unable to call the SAV Helpline to verify social assistance eligibility, the client can provide alternative proof of eligibility (i.e. SOA for month in question) or be requested to provide a Letter of Eligibility from their caseworker.

8. What information should optometrists and physicians document and keep on record for auditing purposes?

Upon obtaining information related to the eligibility of a client, optometrists are advised to document the following information on the client's file (or service provider's database):

- The first and last name of the person who made the call to the SAV Helpline
- The date and time of the call
- Client first and last name
- Health Number (obtained from patient file)
- Date of Service
- Type of Coverage Confirmed (i.e. social assistance program)
- Dates of Coverage Confirmed
- Confirmation number for the call