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Update on Status of Recommendations

LAST RESORT: IMPROVING FAIRNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA'S INCOME ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Public Report No. 45 – March 2009

Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation		
Recommendation	Summary of Actions Taken	Current Assessment
R1: The ministry continue to simplify the process of applying for income assistance with a view to minimizing challenges for applicants. The ministry do this on an ongoing basis and annually report the results to the public. ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	April 15, 2010 As part of pilot projects, ministry staff now offer and book, on a voluntary basis, groups of up to 10 new applicants to complete the orientation and Stage 1 application intake together. This is intended to maximize staff time and reduce client intake time. In March 2010, the ministry released a new online self-serve assessment and application tool to provide people with 24/7 access to income assistance program information and an eligibility assessment tool. People may also complete Stage 1 of the application process from the internet venue of their choice.	FULLY IMPLEMENTED
R2: The ministry enhance the material already provided to income assistance applicants at the time of their initial application. The ministry include a clear written explanation of the steps involved in applying for income assistance in the new material. The ministry complete these steps by October 1, 2009. ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	April 15, 2010 The ministry introduced its new brochure entitled Your Guide to Employment and Income Assistance on the Online Resource on January 4, 2010. The brochure references the exemptions from the three-week work search requirement. It also provides an explanation of the steps involved in applying for income assistance. October 6, 2009 The ministry developed a new brochure entitled Your Guide to Employment and Income Assistance that provides an overview	FULLY IMPLEMENTED

	of the income assistance application. The brochure is intended	
	to be released in fall 2009.	
 R3: The ministry increase the accessibility of its application process by: directing its staff not to provide non-reviewable preliminary opinions of clients' eligibility; minimizing the number of times staff ask clients if they wish to proceed with the application process. The ministry precede any question of this nature with confirmation that the individual has a right to continue the application process; establishing in policy that if clients do not contact the ministry in the requested timeframe that these files will become "No Case Mades" only after 90 days and that these files can be reactivated at any point as long as clients meet the ministry's requirements. 	October 6, 2009 The ministry issued a staff directive on September 16, 2009 advising ministry staff of policy and procedures intended to increase the accessibility of the application process and to ensure that clients in need can complete this process. Concurrent amendments to the applicable staff scripts were effected. July 30, 2009 The ministry plans to issue a staff directive to advise staff of policy and procedures intended to increase the accessibility of the application process and to ensure that clients in need can complete this process. Concurrent amendments to the applicable staff scripts will be effected, and the directive will be included on the Online Resource.	FULLY IMPLEMENTED
ACCEPTED February 12, 2009		
R4: The ministry take the necessary steps to include an exemption from the three-week work search requirement in the Employment and Assistance Regulation for applicants who demonstrate that a work search to the ministry's standards was conducted in the three weeks immediately prior to their application.	July 30, 2009 BC Reg. 98/2009 enacted, effective April 28, 2009. This Order in Council amends the <i>Employment and Assistance Regulation</i> and the <i>Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Regulation</i> , allowing applicants for assistance to search for employment either three weeks following the date of application or to be able to demonstrate that a search for employment was completed prior to the date of the application.	FULLY IMPLEMENTED
ACCEPTED		

February 12, 2009		
R5: The ministry take the necessary steps to include an exemption from the three-week work search requirement in the Employment and Assistance Regulation for single parents with children under the age of three. ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	July 30, 2009 BC Reg. 99/2009 enacted, effective April 28, 2009. This Order in Council amends the Employment and Assistance Regulation and the Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Regulation to exempt sole applicants with a child under age three from the three-week work search requirement.	FULLY IMPLEMENTED
R6: The ministry continuously improve compliance with its service standard that applicants who are exempt from the three-week work search requirement are provided with an eligibility appointment within five business days.	March 27, 2014 There is no longer a service standard specific to applicants who are exempt from the three-week work search requirement. The ministry did not provide data to indicate its level of compliance with the recommendation or whether compliance had improved over the past year.	NO PROGRESS
ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	August 26, 2011 (status as of March 31, 2011) In January 2011, the ministry updated its service standards to include: • Service requests that are not immediate in nature will be actioned within five business days • Immediate Need requests (fleeing abuse, food, shelter and/or urgent medical attention) will be addressed within the same business day • While there is no longer a service standard specific to applicants who are exempt from the three-week work search requirement, ministry staff continue to make every effort to ensure these applicants are assessed within the new standards. April 15, 2010 The ministry is focused on targeting available resources to serve clients in a timely manner to ensure that critical client needs are met, but may not be able to maintain its 2008/09 service levels under current economic conditions.	

R7: The ministry continuously improve compliance in providing eligibility	March 24, 2014 No progress since last update.	ONGOING
appointments within one business day to individuals with immediate needs. ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	March 20, 2013 The ministry confirmed that it remains committed to improving compliance with its service standards, including to individuals with immediate needs. The ministry is currently reviewing its intake process, to identify improvement opportunities with the goal of reducing the time to complete the intake process.	
	August 26, 2011 (status as of March 31, 2011) In January 2011, the ministry updated its service standards and now reflects the following related timeliness standards: • Service requests that are not immediate in nature will be actioned within five business days • Immediate Need requests (fleeing abuse, food, shelter and/or urgent medical attention) will be addressed within the same business day	
	April 15, 2010 The ministry is focused on targeting available resources to serve clients in a timely manner to ensure that critical client needs are met, but may not be able to maintain its 2008/09 service levels under current economic conditions.	
R8: To ensure compliance with ministry policy on immediate needs assessments and increase consistency in how staff conduct these assessments, the ministry:	March 27, 2014 No file reviews or audits evaluating compliance with ministry policy on immediate needs assessments have been scheduled as of March 24, 2014.	IMPLEMENTED IN PART The first point is satisfied NO PROGRESS on the second and third points
regularly provide training for staff; regularly audit compliance; and report audit outcomes publicly on an annual basis. ACCEPTED	March 20, 2013 In December 2012, standard operating procedures were introduced for staff on completing immediate needs assessment intakes and for applicants that are fleeing abuse. No file reviews or audits evaluating compliance with legislation and ministry policies have been scheduled as of March 20, 2013.	
February 12, 2009	March 29, 2012 Training provided to all ministry front-line staff between January 30 and March 30 in preparation for system upgrades being	

	implemented on April 2, 2012. Training specific to the immediate needs assessment has been provided to staff in the intake module. August 26, 2011 (status as of March 31, 2011) As of March 31, 2011, there were no audits scheduled, as the ministry continued to respond to immediate client needs as its most pressing priority. However, ongoing training was being led by regional Policy, Program and Implementation Managers, including regular discussions with supervisors and staff. April 15, 2010 In June 2009 a Quick Reference Guide on the immediate needs assessment was developed and staff were encouraged to access the Online Resource.	
R9: The ministry take the necessary steps to remedy the potential for unfairness caused by the two-year financial independence requirement by either seeking to add further exemptions or providing legal authority for supervisors to waive the requirement by March 31, 2010.	April 15, 2010 BC Reg. 279/2009 (effective December 1, 2009) amends the Employment and Assistance Regulation to provide staff with the legal authority to waive the two-year independence requirement in certain circumstances.	FULLY IMPLEMENTED
ACCEPTED February 12, 2009		
R10: The ministry track the number of income assistance applications it receives. For each application, the ministry track whether it is approved, abandoned or denied. The ministry have this process in place by July 1, 2009. ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	October 6, 2009 The ministry issued a staff directive on September 16, 2009 to emphasize the importance of properly coding the result of an application. June 30, 2009 The ministry is now tracking the number of applications received, as well as whether each application is approved, abandoned or denied. To help enhance tracking capacity, the staff directive scheduled to be issued in fall 2009 will emphasize the importance of properly coding the result of an application.	FULLY IMPLEMENTED

	T T	
R11: The ministry use Statistics Canada LAD data to track whether people who discontinue income assistance applications move on to employment or educational programs within two months of discontinuing their	March 24, 2014 The ministry does not track and report this information as its agreement with Statistics Canada has expired. The ministry has not developed any alternate mechanisms for tracking and reporting on this information.	NO PROGRESS
applications and report this data publicly by September 1, 2010. The ministry develop reliable and effective mechanisms to continue to track this and report the results publicly on an applied basis beginning in 2014.	August 26, 2011 (status as of March 31, 2011) The ministry released this report on January 6, 2011. However, this was a one-time report because Statistics Canada is not currently accepting new proposals for data sharing.	
annual basis, beginning in 2011. ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	September 17, 2010 The ministry entered into an agreement with Statistics Canada to conduct a one-time data match project. The ministry has now received the Statistics Canada LAD data, and expects to complete the report later this year, at which time it will be posted on the ministry website. However the ministry cannot continue to track and report this information as its agreement with Statistics Canada has expired.	
R12: The ministry take the necessary steps to include an exemption in the <i>Employment and Assistance Regulation</i> from the requirement to be on income assistance for 12 of the previous 15 months for people who, at the time they	March 24, 2014 The ministry has concluded a three-month long consultation on disability. The results of the consultation will inform the development of a white paper that will, in turn, form the foundation for a summit on the issues facing people with disabilities in BC.	NO PROGRESS
apply for income assistance, have barriers for which there is no program to remedy.	March 20, 2013 The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole.	
ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	March 29, 2012 The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole.	

	August 26, 2011 (status as of March 31, 2011) The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole. April 15, 2010 The ministry is in the process of reviewing all of the Ombudsperson's recommendations related to the ministry's PPMB program. The ministry advised that, given the breadth of scope and related nature of these recommendations, a bundled approach is being taken to determine viable options for implementation.	
R13: The ministry revise the PPMB medical report form so that it: • provides information to doctors about the PPMB program and documentation requirements; • provides an opportunity for doctors to include information on how the client's	March 24, 2014 The ministry has concluded a three-month long consultation on disability. The results of the consultation will inform the development of a white paper that will, in turn, form the foundation for a summit on the issues facing people with disabilities in BC.	NO PROGRESS
medical condition affects his or her ability to work; and	March 20, 2013 The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole.	
 removes the request for information about the length of time a doctor has been seeing a patient. 	March 29, 2012 The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole.	
ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	August 26, 2011 (status as of March 31, 2011) The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole.	
	April 15, 2010 The ministry is in the process of reviewing all of the Ombudsperson's recommendations related to the ministry's PPMB program. The ministry advised that, given the breadth of scope and related nature of these recommendations, a bundled approach is being taken to determine viable options for	

	implementation.	
R14: The ministry conduct a file review to determine compliance with the ministry's definitions of "seriously impedes" and "precludes" when staff determine eligibility for PPMB and report the findings publicly. ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	March 24, 2014 The ministry has concluded a three-month long consultation on disability. The results of the consultation will inform the development of a white paper that will, in turn, form the foundation for a summit on the issues facing people with disabilities in BC. March 20, 2013 The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole. March 29, 2012 The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole. August 26, 2011	NO PROGRESS
	(status as of March 31, 2011) The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole. April 15, 2010 The ministry is in the process of reviewing all of the Ombudsperson's recommendations related to the ministry's PPMB program. The ministry advised that, given the breadth of scope and related nature of these recommendations, a bundled approach is being taken to determine viable options for implementation.	
R15: The ministry conduct a detailed file review of the effectiveness of the employability screen in producing a useful measure of a person's ability to work and publicly report the results of this review. The ministry take these steps by December 1, 2009. ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	March 24, 2014 The ministry has concluded a three-month long consultation on disability. The results of the consultation will inform the development of a white paper that will, in turn, form the foundation for a summit on the issues facing people with disabilities in BC. March 20, 2013 The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole.	NO PROGRESS

R16(A): The ministry provide clear	March 29, 2012 The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole. August 26, 2011 (status as of March 31, 2011) The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole. April 15, 2010 The ministry is in the process of reviewing all of the Ombudsperson's recommendations related to the ministry's PPMB program. The ministry advised that, given the breadth of scope and related nature of these recommendations, a bundled approach is being taken to determine viable options for implementation. March 24, 2014	NO PROGRESS
written information about the PPMB program to all people applying for income assistance by March 31, 2010. ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	The ministry has concluded a three-month long consultation on disability. The results of the consultation will inform the development of a white paper that will, in turn, form the foundation for a summit on the issues facing people with disabilities in BC. March 20, 2013 The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole. March 29, 2012 The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole. August 26, 2011 (status as of March 31, 2011) The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole. April 15, 2010 The ministry is in the process of reviewing all of the	

	Ombudsperson's recommendations related to the ministry's PPMB program. The ministry advised that, given the breadth of scope and related nature of these recommendations, a bundled approach is being taken to determine viable options for implementation.	
R16(B): The ministry create a form that clients can use to apply for PPMB status themselves by March 31, 2010. ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	March 24, 2014 The ministry has concluded a three-month long consultation on disability. The results of the consultation will inform the development of a white paper that will, in turn, form the foundation for a summit on the issues facing people with disabilities in BC. March 20, 2013 The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole.	NO PROGRESS
	March 29, 2012 The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole.	
	August 26, 2011 (status as of March 31, 2011) The ministry is continuing to review the PPMB program as a whole.	
	April 15, 2010 The ministry is in the process of reviewing all of the Ombudsperson's recommendations related to the ministry's PPMB program. The ministry advised that, given the breadth of scope and related nature of these recommendations, a bundled approach is being taken to determine viable options for implementation.	
R17: The ministry complete a review of the PPMB program to determine the reasons for the reduction in its caseload since 2003/2004 and report the results publicly by October 1, 2009.	April 15, 2010 In January 2010, the ministry publicly released the report explaining the reasons for the reduction in PPMB caseload since 2003/04 on its website. October 6, 2009	FULLY IMPLEMENTED

ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	The ministry is in the process of preparing a report to explain the reasons for the reduction in the PPMB caseload since 2003/2004. The report is intended to be released publicly in fall 2009.	
R18: The ministry review its policies and procedures on an ongoing basis to identify and eliminate any circumstances in which clients with chronic or ongoing medical conditions are required to reconfirm these conditions to continue to receive health supplements. ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	September 17, 2010 In July 2010, the ministry completed a review of its policies and procedures for all continuing health supplements. April 15, 2010 The ministry completed an initial review of the medical documentation requirements in 2006 to identify and eliminate any circumstances in which clients were required to reconfirm their chronic or ongoing medical conditions. Another review of ministry policy and procedures is currently underway.	FULLY IMPLEMENTED
R19: The ministry develop a clear policy directive that requires staff to review the documents that are on file before requiring clients to submit new documents and to return the original versions to clients. The ministry develop this policy directive by September 1, 2009. ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	October 6, 2009 The staff directive issued on September 16, 2009 reaffirmed the ministry's current practice and expectation that ministry staff minimize requests for documentation. July 30, 2009 The ministry's practice and expectation is for ministry staff to routinely review documents on file before requiring clients to submit new documents when applying for supplements. This will be reflected in the staff directive scheduled to be issued in fall 2009, which will be included on the Online Resource.	FULLY IMPLEMENTED
R20(A): The ministry develop policy outlining how and when it expects staff to assist clients to obtain documents by October 1, 2009. ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	October 6, 2009 The ministry developed new policy and procedures to outline how and when ministry staff may assist a client to obtain documents and to explain the duty to accommodate. The ministry's Online Resource was updated on September 29, 2009, to introduce these changes.	FULLY IMPLEMENTED
R21(A): The ministry review documents it requires applicants and clients to sign in person with the goal of reducing the number of forms that need to be submitted in person.	March 20, 2013 In August 2012 the ministry amended the policy and procedures on the Online Resource to broaden the number of forms for which prescribed professionals and other government staff may witness. Two additional related updates have also been made:	FULLY IMPLEMENTED

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ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	the ministry's Consent to Disclosure of Information form is now available publicly on the Online Resource so that anyone can witness this form; and, the witness requirement has been removed from the Child in the Home of a Relative Screen consent form.	
	The above changes resulting from the review that was undertaken by the ministry have reduced the number of circumstances where applicants and clients must sign forms in person.	
	March 29, 2012 Policy changes are now in the process of being implemented via an Online Resource update. Following approval, the Online Resource update will be available publicly on the ministry's Online Resource.	
	August 26, 2011 (status as of March 31, 2011) As of March 31, 2011, the preliminary results of the review had been prepared for final decision, including any policy changes that could be implemented through an update to the ministry's Online Resource.	
	April 15, 2010 A review of ministry policy, procedures and documentations is in progress to assess circumstances where applicants and clients must sign forms in person.	
R21(B): The ministry develop a policy allowing the acceptance of documents notarized in B.C., or other equally effective and reliable mechanisms, in lieu of requiring documents to be signed in person at a ministry, government agent or	April 15, 2010 The ministry clarified that prior to amending its policy, it determined that broadening witness groups would offer equal or greater accessibility across the province because there are more government staff and health professionals than notary publics across the province, especially in remote and rural areas.	FULLY IMPLEMENTED
trusted third party office. The ministry develop this policy by March 31, 2010. ACCEPTED	October 6, 2009 The ministry amended its policy to broaden ministry witness groups to include other government staff and health professionals. The amendment was introduced on the Online	

February 12, 2009	Resource on September 17, 2009.	
R22: The ministry expand its current arrangements with trusted third parties or develop other mechanisms for communities where there is no ministry office and it does not have an agreement with Service BC.	September 17, 2010 A new Service Level Agreement was negotiated between the ministry and Service BC and announced on July 12, 2010. This new agreement has expanded the current arrangements with the Kitimat, Fort Nelson, and Nakusp offices. April 15, 2010	FULLY IMPLEMENTED
ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	The ministry is assessing its current arrangements with trusted third parties and Service BC and will be in a position to provide a further update after that review has been completed.	
R23: The ministry consider mechanisms that would allow it to compensate affected people for their loss of quantifiable additional benefits between April 30, 2006 and December 2, 2008.	NOT ACCEPTED	
NOT ACCEPTED		
R24: Ministry staff offer to provide clients with written reasons for all reviewable decisions, including eligibility for income assistance by October 1, 2009.	October 6, 2009 The ministry developed new policies and procedures for ministry staff to offer written reasons when communicating decisions. The ministry's Online Resource was updated on September 29, 2009 to introduce these changes.	FULLY IMPLEMENTED
ACCEPTED February 12, 2009		
R25: The ministry adopt the use of file reviews and/or audits as its preferred method of evaluating compliance with legislation and ministry policies. The ministry make the results public and include a statement of methodology with the results.	March 27, 2014 The ministry has reinstated the use of individual eligibility file reviews to confirm that decisions are made in compliance with the applicable legislation. Regular individual file reviews are also conducted by the Prevention and Loss Management Branch. The ministry has not publicly released the findings resulting from these reviews.	ONGOING
ACCEPTED February 12, 2009	March 20, 2013 No file reviews or audits evaluating compliance with legislation and ministry policies have been scheduled as of March 20,	

2013.	
August 26, 2011 (status as of March 31, 2011) No file reviews or audits evaluating compliance with legislation and ministry policies had been scheduled as of March 31, 2011.	
April 15, 2010 The ministry has yet to conduct any file reviews/audits.	