

INFORMATION PACKAGE FOR Hiring a Special Needs Worker



Prepared by: SSAH Family Advisory Committee for Ottawa Carleton
Revised by: Service Coordination des services 2007

PURPOSE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The purpose of this information package is to act as a resource guide for families and/or individuals who have funding to hire a special needs worker. Funding can be from Special Services at Home, Passport or Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities. Families and individuals may wish to access the Special Services Worker Bank or locate a worker themselves.

A volunteer group of parent of children and adults with special needs formed a task force as part of the SSAH Family Advisory Committee for Ottawa Carleton to produce a user friendly, family resource guide to provide information and to help reduce some of the stress associated with maintaining and managing SSAH contracts. This version was updated in 2007 by Service Coordination des services

You are encouraged to copy, distribute, rearrange, change and share this information with whomever and where you feel it will accomplish its objectives.

Disability specific information as well as resource information for special needs workers in Ottawa is available through the Special Services Worker Bank by calling (613)748-1788. Ext 240 www.scsottawa.on.ca sswb.rtss@scsottawa.on.ca

HIRING A WORKER:

When to begin the search for a worker:

- If this is your first time applying for SSAH or Passport funding, start the search BEFORE your contract with SSAH or Passport begins. You may also access the worker bank if you have ACSD.
- If you have already been funded through SSAH and this is reapplication BUT NOT A CRISIS, give yourself three to four weeks for the search, if you are doing it yourself.
- If you are using the worker bank, two weeks recommended. There may be a waiting period beyond this if no suitable workers are available.

Where to find workers

The Ottawa area has the Special Services Worker Bank operating out of Service Coordination at (613) 748-1788 ext. 240 www.scsottawa.on.ca or sswb.rtss@scsottawa.on.ca

To hire a worker through the Worker Bank simply call the telephone number indicated above or send an email and have the following information ready:

- A general idea of the level of expertise you need/want
- Preferred worker gender (i.e. male or female)
- First language preference
- A rough idea of scheduling i.e. when you will require the worker – times & days

ALSO you can find many competent people who might be interested in working with individuals with special needs by getting in touch with:

- Local high schools (guidance/students services office and/or the Co-op placement office)
- Universities (Placement and Career Services or Student Association for students with special needs.)
- Community Colleges
- Local Associations
- Local Hospitals and Long term Care facilities
- Local newspaper by inserting your own person specific as
- Local church bulletins (youth groups and/or parent support groups)

What are your needs?

Identifying your needs is probably the most important thing you have to do to achieve a good fit between your family and your special needs worker. Start by asking yourself some questions and writing down the answers. **Let's begin!**

Q. What do I need the worker to do?

When answering this question be sure to include your family’s specific expectations. For example:

- Medication administration
- CRP training
- Respite
- Non-smoker
- Swimmer – qualification
- Worker gender (e.g. male o female)
- Programming
- Job coaching
- Driver’s license

Q. What qualities should I look for in a potential worker?

- Knowledgeable, warm, caring
- Willing to learn
- Problem solver
- Can take direction
- Can make decisions based on good judgment
- Positive outlook
- Energetic, dependable
- Flexible, accessible and responsive to family member’s needs
- Good rapport with family member and family

NOTE: When interviewing the potential worker be sure to communicate clearly what **your expectations** are and ask the worker what **his/her expectations** are for you. For example, if the worker will be working over a meal time, do you **expect** the worker to provide his/her own meal, or do you **expect** the worker to eat what you provide, or does it matter? What are your expectations regarding worker expenses attached directly to providing service and support, such para transpo cost or other transportation cost when accompanying your family members to a specific event, not to mention the admittance cost to the event? What happens when the worker expects you to pay and you expect the worker to pay? See section on discretionary funding.

The interview

This is where **COMMUNICATION SKILLS** are most important. Now that you have identified your needs and have actually written them down somewhere. The interview is where you get to talk about or describe these needs with a potential assistant! Yes – another **YOU!** Use this precious time well! **SAY IT LIKE IT IS!**

How to conduct the interview

- Schedule an interview time that is appropriate for you and for the potential worker. Don't be in a hurry.
- Schedule about an hour for the interview
- If you want, ask the potential worker to bring their resume and a copy of their police records check for the vulnerable sector to the interview
- Take time to check references and ask for verification of professional expertise
- Be prepared – have your questions ready, your family member's profile handy, your expectation highlighted, and family member present for part if not all of the interview
- Be specific about chores, programming duties and family member's specific needs.
- You can ask for copies of professional and educational certificates.
- Be sure to discuss salary expectations – i.e. the rate of pay the worker expects for the services described as well as what you are prepared to pay and how the worker is to invoice his/her services.

NOTE: If you know after a few minutes that you are not comfortable with the worker, there is no harm in taking more time to confirm your suspicions. If you feel really positive and comfortable and about the applicant and you want to hire them on the spot- wait a minute! It's a good idea to complete the interview and advise the applicant that you will call in a day or two to advise them of your decision. Remember everyone looks good when you're desperate. Take time to make sure this will work for all of you.

About references: Things that you should know!

When you are hiring a person to work with your child/family member, it is important to ask for and check two or three references. These can be both personal and/or work related.

Personal references: can include an adult friend, minister or priest, a teacher, professor, instructor or a neighbor.

Work related references: may include a past employer, a supervisor in an employment environment, families for who the applicant has worked in either a baby sitting position or another special needs contract.

Here are a few suggestions for questions you can ask when checking references?

-
- 1) What is your relationship with the applicant?
 - 2) How long have you know this person?
 - 3) Describe the job description and ask the referee if he/she has concerns about the applicant's ability to perform these duties.
 - 4) Does the applicant follow directions?
 - 4) Is the applicant reliable? Punctual? Honest?
 - 5) Is there anything else you would like to comment on?
-

ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING POSITIVE AND PRODUCTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH WORKERS

1. **The schedule** – Try to plan the day, time period, and the expectations for the worker. What do you want the worker to do, where, and how? Is this time period for developmental programming, social skills training, just plain respite or all of the above? Indicate your expectations and ask the worker if she/he has any questions about the expectation. Keep in touch – give workers advance notice of any change in your or your family's schedule. When they arrive don't forget to bring them up to date on the health status, or performance level.
2. **Rate of pay** – This should be established at the interview when you make an offer of employment. Be sure to include **A)** how i.e. by cheque, cash, and **B)** when – i.e. every two weeks, after each contract, or once a month, you pay your workers and outline the protocol – i.e. individual time sheets and/or the SSAH invoice sheet. Be specific – So much per hour for behavior management vis-à-vis so much per day for therapy or community integration and so much while the individual is sleeping and not in direct service or contact. If you need assistance in determining the rate of pay, call the Worker Bank or ask your Special Agreement Officer at SSAH or agency staff.
3. **Probationary period** – Sometimes we don't always get a good fit when hiring a worker, whether that is from their perspective or ours. A way to acknowledge this possibility and to be helpful for all concerned is to establish a probationary period of two to four weeks before any final employment commitment is made by either part. Of course the worker is paid the agreed upon wage during this period, but at the end or in the middle of the probationary period either one of you can opt out of the contract by stating that there isn't a good fit – no questions asked. However once a worker is employed on a permanent basis (for the duration of the SSAH contact), then it is recommended that you find reasonable notice if you intend to terminate employment, and expect the same from the worker.

Here are a few more tested tips for establishing and maintaining good working relationships:

Discuss problems as soon as they arise: Identify the problem – punctuality, dependability, reliability, competence, or whatever, and be prepared to negotiate a solution to the problem.

Keep communication open and on-going: Maintaining a communication book can assist both worker and person responsible for the program (parent, family member, behavior management consultant etc.) be informed and responsive to any suggestion or recommendations documented.

If serious problems arise: document dates, times, issues and concerns. Contact the Worker Bank immediately if you hired the worker through them. In a situation of abuse or neglect, contact the authorities. You will probably want to confide in someone that you trust in order get some personal support and assistance. For example: your GP, nurse, pediatrician, social worker and good friend.

*****Remember** – confidentiality works both ways! It is important that you maintain confidentiality with your worker and your worker maintains confidentiality with you and family.

For quality programming and/or therapy services, invite your special needs worker to accompany you to a therapy appointment to observe the therapist at work with your child/family member. In this environment, the worker can ask the therapist questions and observe and implement the program under the watchful eyes of the expert-the therapist! This also allows you to observe the worker in the action with your child/family member.

Discretionary Funding

Definition: dis-cre-tion (n); dis-cre-tion-ary (adj); quality of being individual, prudence, individual choice or judgment; power free decision or latitude of choice (Merriam Webster)

Families are responsible for expenses incurred by the individual/child/family member as well as the expenses incurred by the special needs worker while the worker is providing service to the family member.

In certain circumstances, families can pay for some worker expenses from their special needs allocation. At the time of your renewal application outline or discuss with S.A.O. any specific needs that you anticipate in the upcoming year.

This does not mean that you are given extra funding, but from you total allocation you can earmark or budget some of these funds for costs incurred by the worker.

For example:

- 1) If your worker consults with one of your family member's therapists or the behavior management consultant, you can charge these hours up to two hours per month as a discretionary expense
- 2) If the worker incurs travel or assorted costs when integrating your child into community activities, these costs can be included as discretionary expense.
- 3) If you are unable to find a worker in your area and need to advertise in local papers, the cost associated with the advertising and locating a worker can be allocated to discretionary expenses.
- 4) If your special needs worker would benefit from taking a workshop related to your child/family member's disability, the cost to pay for your worker for the time spent at the workshop may be assigned as a discretionary expense.

For any other person specific or family specific needs that occur speak with your Special Agreements Officer.

Some expectations that you may have of your special needs worker

To help you get started, here is a list of a few expectations that you might have for a potential worker. Exactly what are your expectations? Write them down and compare them to yourself. Not every applicant will possess all of those listed; some will have more and some will have less. Decide which are most important for you and your family. Look for those and help develop the rest. Good Luck!

- Punctual
- Honest
- Creative
- Imaginative
- Reliable
- Positive
- Responsible
- Supportive
- Patient
- Energetic
- Kind
- Flexible
- Understanding
- Professional
- Organized



HOME ALONE

A CHECKLIST FOR FAMILIES

Before leaving your family member at home alone with a special services worker, make sure the following information is available!

- Your full name
- The full name of the place you can be located, the phone number and when you expect to return
- The phone number of neighbor or relative to call for assistance in you cannot be reached in an emergency.
- A list of emergence phone numbers: police, fire (in the event of a fire in your own home, instruct the special needs worker to call the fire department for a neighbor's home.), doctor, ambulance, and dentist. You may want to leave cab fare (and health card) in an envelope in case a doctor or dentist asks that the individual be brought to the office.
- A tour of the house, pointing out and explaining telephones, door locks, security systems, the thermostat, circuit breakers, and the location of a flashlight.
- Medical information, including allergies, medical conditions, and administration of medicines.
- House keys, if needed
- Knowledge of the behavior you expect from a special needs worker (i.e. no smoking, alcohol, or entertaining, excessive phone use, loud music, among others)
- Knowledge of your family rules, such as disciplining and/or behavior management, television viewing, stereo and phone use, visitors to your home, and acceptable forms of recreation.
- Meal instructions, snacks, medication protocol and/or bottle feeding times for infant/toddlers. Advise your worker of any allergies
- Location and instructions for clothing, equipment and other sundry items
- Information about routines and needs, such as stories, teeth care, bath/shower, pajamas, water, blankets, nightlight, and the appropriate night time routine
- Suggestions for activities
- Homework and/or chores individual is encouraged to complete in the time frame.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION CHECKLIST

Son/Daughter

Name: _____ Age: _____

Name: _____ Age: _____

Name: _____ Age: _____

Emergency calls

Parents can be reached at : _____

Telephone number: _____

Fire, Police, Ambulance: 911

Poison Information Centre: (613) 737-1100

Doctor: Name: _____
 Tel. no. : _____

Neighbor / Relative:
 Name: _____
 Tel. no. : _____

Taxi:
 Name: _____
 Tel. no. : _____

Instructions on how emergency personnel can reach the home

Address: _____

Directions: _____

Schedules

Mealtimes: _____

Bedtimes: _____

Other: _____

Special Issues and Instructions (allergies, medications, etc.)

Additional information to give workers:

- Tour of the home
- Fire plan
- Location and use of the fire extinguisher
- Location of telephone
- Pet routines
- Location of clothing and food
- Instructions on the use of appliances
- Directions to closes neighbor
- Expected calls or visitors
- Expected time of return

CONTRACT FOR SERVICES

BETWEEN

Person responsible for payment & supervision

AND

Service Provider

The service provider hereby agrees to provide services as a special needs worker to _____ and carry out family / parent relief, as well as developmental programming, which includes social skills training, orientation and mobility training behavior management, recreation and leisure time pursuits, community integration, personal care, personal supervision and / or related duties as required. These services will be provided for a specified and agreed upon time period which within the MCSS approved time from, beginning _____ and ending _____, services will be paid by the Ministry of Community and Social Services in co-operation with _____ in the amount of \$_____ per hour.

It is agreed that this is a contract for special services at home and that the service provider shall acknowledge responsibility for declaring this income and paying all the taxes thereon.

The parties have agreed to the forgoing terms and conditions on this the _____ day of the month of _____ in the year _____.

Signature _____
Service Provider Date

Signature _____
Person Responsible for Payment and Supervision Date

PERSONAL PROFILE FOR

Name of child / individual

Date of Completion: _____

Name of Parent (s) . Guardian: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Telephone: (h) _____ (w) _____

Birth date: _____
(dd/mm/yy)

Current height / weight: _____

School / employer / day program _____ Phone: _____

Is individual right or left handed? _____

Eating information: Circle appropriate choice and add any person specific information that will help worker to be more effective.

- a) can feed independently / needs help / to be fed by worker
- b) Drinks from a glass / cup / bottle / other
- c) Favorite foods include: _____

- d) Least favorite foods: _____

- e) Food allergies: _____

Personal care and toileting needs: Please list or describe person specific protocol and supplies/ equipment to be used in these circumstances.

Sleeping / resting / Leisure time pursuits: Please list or describe person specific directions to be followed in any of these circumstances.

Communication needs: Please describe the communication requirements including gestures, sign language etc.

Medical information:

Name of Doctor: _____ Phone: _____

A) If individual has a seizure disorder, please describe

B) If Individual takes medication, please describe.

Name of drug(s): _____

Drug prescribed for: _____

Time Taken: _____

How taken: _____

Dosage: _____

C) If individual has any allergies / sensitivities, please indicate:

Drugs: _____

Foods: _____

Other: _____

Describe reaction: _____

D) If individual is menstruating, please describe needs and personal specific protocol.

E) If individual is not independently mobile, list any special equipment used.
Describe methods used to assist person to transfer etc.

F) Please add any other information that you feel will assist the worker to be
effective with your family member.

TIPS FOR FAMILIES

INTERVIEWING SPECIAL NEEDS WORKERS

1. Interview several workers to find the one that best meets your needs
2. Explain your needs clearly to potential workers. (i.e. I need someone to do orientation and mobility training (bus training with Ann, or. I need someone to provide personal support and developmental programming every Saturday morning for three hours. Can you meet this time commitment?)
3. Ask potential workers to describe themselves, and their interests that might be of benefit to your child/family member. (Tai-Kwon-Do, cooking, hockey games, music, swimming, etc.)
4. Ask about experience with particular procedures (G-tube deeding, behavior management, medication administration, personal and attendant care, seizure activity)
5. Look for creative and energetic workers. Ask applicant about ideas for activities
6. Schedule part of the interview when you child/family member will be there and watch how the potential worker related and interacts with him/her
7. Ask about availability on emergency and shot notice basis
8. Ask to see a resume and ask for names, addresses and phone numbers for references
9. Discuss the rate of pay and invoicing procedure with the worker (s) you are going to hire.
10. Define describe your expectations for the worker and ask the worker to define his/her expectations in the position.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FAMILIES WITH INDIVIDUALS NEEDING SPECIAL SERVICES

1. Be the advocates for your child / individual and family, and endeavor to respect and reinforce in the view of others, the uniqueness and individuality of all concerned.
2. Acknowledge the humanness of all the professionals serving and supporting this family, and remember that they too are unique, no better or worse than the rest of us and who have chosen this way to make their living
3. Endeavour to regard the professional as out equal, participating **ACTIVELY** in the partnership.
4. Accept the responsibility got your child / individual and shall assist and support them in attending to their own best interests.
5. Recognize the professionals as resources and choose those professionals whose actions and attitude demonstrate a respect for the child / person and the family.
6. Accentuate the positive and keep the negative in perspective
7. Ensure, that when contracting for service, that the service goals are focused on the child/ individual and the family receiving these services, and that the goals are stated in a clear and precise manner.
8. Be persistent in your efforts to access accurate, complete and unbiased information in an attempt to make informed decisions on behalf of and your child/family member
9. Recognize your vulnerability, sensitivity and emotional involvement and make an effort to direct your anger and frustrations appropriately.
10. Endeavour to develop a sense of humor, to celebrate and to care for yourselves and your families in order to participate fully in all aspects of community life.