

Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit is Ending **- Apply before December 31, 2012 -**

The Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB) is a benefit for people who receive Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) or Ontario Works (OW) benefits. CSUMB ends on January 1, 2013.

If you are on ODSP/OW and you think you might be eligible for CSUMB, you must apply before December 31, 2012.

CSUMB is an ODSP/OW benefit that helps with issues like: first and last month's rent deposits, buying or replacing furniture, deposits for utilities, and overdue utility bills.

In 2013, local municipal governments will start to provide some benefits that are similar to the CSUMB. We do not know what these new benefits will be in each community. If you are not sure about applying for CSUMB, you can get free legal advice from a legal clinic (see page 4).

This kit includes information about:

- Applying for CSUMB
- Internal Review and Appeal Processes (how to challenge an ODSP/OW decision)
- The campaign to save CSUMB
- Ontario's Social Assistance Review, and
- Getting Legal Help.

Applying for CSUMB

The Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB) is a benefit available to people in receipt of ODSP/OW. CSUMB is designed to assist with some of the following issues:

Moving into a new residence, including:

- last month's rent deposit
- deposits and connection fees for heat or utilities
- moving costs

Maintaining your current place of residence, including:

- rent arrears to prevent eviction
- payments to keep utilities or heat on, or to turn utilities back on

CSUMB can also *sometimes* be used to assist with items related to health and well-being, such as:

- assistance responding to bed-bug issues
- assistance if you need to buy or repair necessary home appliances
- assistance if you need to buy clothing, furniture, and other household goods

The maximum CSUMB in any 24 month period is generally \$799 for a single person/couple and \$1500 for families with children.

If you have exceptional circumstances, such as a flood or fire, or you have moved or need to move because of domestic violence, it is possible to get the CSUMB more than once in 24 months. Usually, you would have to demonstrate that not getting CSUMB would be harmful to health or well-being.

There is no formal application form for CSUMB. We suggest that you write a letter directly to your OW/ODSP worker.

Your letter to request CSUMB should:

1. be dated, and include your name, address and OW/ODSP case ID number (on your OW/ODSP cheque stub or statement of assistance).
2. explain that you are writing to request the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit.
3. describe the reason(s) why you need CSUMB, including details and documentation (for example: proof of bedbugs, notice of eviction).
4. indicate the amount of money that you are requesting, as well as breakdown of the cost of each item. You should list all the items you need, even if the total is more than the maximum CSUMB.
5. if possible, you should demonstrate how the costs were calculated, for example: include a copy of a new lease or receipts for any items that have already been paid (it is better to submit requests before the items have been purchased, but it is of course not always possible to do so).
6. include a doctor's note, if the benefit is needed to support health or well-being.
7. include a request for a written response so that you will have a decision in writing about your request (in case your CSUMB application is denied and an internal review is required).

It is strongly recommended that you quote the CSUMB policy directives in your letter (see link to Directives below).

The information above is very general. **Here is more information to help you prepare your CSUMB request:**

- **Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO) booklet about CSUMB:**
www.cleo.on.ca/en/publications/csub/how-do-i-apply-csumb#full
- **Ontario Works Directive about CSUMB:**
www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/programs/social/directives/directives/owdirectives/7_5_OW_Directives.aspx
- **ODSP Directive about CSUMB:**
www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/programs/social/directives/directives/ODSPDirectives/income_support/9_2_ODSP_ISDirectives.aspx

Keep a copy of your CSUMB request letter. Make a note of when and how you submitted your letter, for example, if you:

- deliver your letter in person: ask the OW/ODSP staff to date-stamp your copy.
- send your letter by mail: make a note of the date that you put it in the mail.
- send your letter by FAX: keep the FAX confirmation record.

You can also call your OW/ODSP worker to let your worker know that you have requested the CSUMB. Make a note of the date and time of your call.

For additional support for applying for CSUMB or appealing a denial of the benefit, please see **Getting Legal Help** at the end of page 4.

Here are some other places that might help with some of these costs:

- **Rent Bank:** www.ontariorentbank.net .
- **Low Income Energy Network:** www.lowincomeenergy.ca .

Internal Review and Appeal Process (how to challenge an OW/ODSP decision)

If your CSUMB request is denied, you have the right to ask for an “Internal Review” of the decision. A different person at the OW/ODSP office will review your Internal Review request and make a decision.

An Internal Review must be requested in writing and within 30 days from the date you receive the decision letter. Keep both the decision letter and the envelope as the mailed date shown on the envelope may be different than the date on the letter.

The OW or ODSP office is supposed to make a decision on the internal review within 10 days from the date they receive the request.

If the Internal Review decision still denies your CSUMB application, you have 30 days from the date of the Internal Review decision to file an appeal with the Social Benefits Tribunal (SBT).

If you don't get an Internal Review decision within the 10 days, you can appeal the original decision to the SBT within 40 days from the date of your request for an Internal Review.

To appeal to the SBT, you must use their appeal form. You can get one from an OW or ODSP office, a community legal clinic, or by calling the SBT: 1-800-753-3895 or at www.sbt.gov.on.ca in the “forms” section.

Extensions of Time for Internal Reviews and Appeals

If you miss the time limit for an Internal Review or Appeal, you can ask for an extension of time. Extensions of time are not always granted, so it is best to file your Internal Review and Appeal in time.

If you want to request an Internal Review or submit an Appeal, you should get legal advice. Please see **Getting Legal Help** below. CLEO's *Appeals and Internal Reviews* booklet has more information: www.cleo.on.ca/en/publications/apir .

Campaign to Save the CSUMB

There is a campaign to try to save the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit. For more information or to get involved, please visit:

<http://sareview.ca/isac-news/the-real-cost-of-cutting-the-community-start-up-and-maintenance-benefit/> .

Ontario's Social Assistance Review

The Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario conducted a major review of Ontario's Social Assistance system. ***Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario*** is the long-awaited report of the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario. The report is available on the Commission's website: www.socialassistancereview.ca/final-report .

The report proposes major changes to Ontario's social assistance programs. The changes would require new legislation. The future of the report and its recommendations is uncertain because of the Ontario Premier's prorogation of the Ontario Legislature.

The Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) is an Ontario community legal clinic that specializes in income security issues, including social assistance. ISAC does not provide direct services to individuals. For ISAC's response to the Commission report, please visit the ISAC Social Assistance Review website: <http://sareview.ca/> .

Getting Legal Help

If you are living with HIV in Ontario, please call HALCO for free legal advice at 416-340-7790 or toll-free 1-888-705-8889.

If you are not living with HIV, you can contact your local community legal clinic for free legal advice. To find your local community legal clinic, contact Legal Aid Ontario:

www.legalaid.on.ca/clinics

Legal Aid Ontario telephone 416-979-1446 or toll-free 1-800-668-8258

Legal Aid Ontario TTY 416-598-8867 or TTY toll-free 1-866-641-8867