

3
ONTARIO WORKS PROGRAM
CONSOLIDATED VERIFICATION PROCESS
PROGRAM REPORT

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, November 25, 2004 from the Commissioner of Community Services and Housing:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received for information by Committee and Council.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Committee and Council with information regarding the Ontario Work's Program's Consolidated Verification Process (CVP). This case monitoring activity is one of the program review functions performed by staff to comprehensively assess ongoing eligibility for financial assistance under the *Ontario Works Act* and ensure that those who are eligible are receiving the correct amount of assistance.

3. BACKGROUND

The CVP, a mandated business process within the Ontario Works Program implemented in York Region in February of 2000, is a province-wide standard for conducting case reviews. It amalgamates several verification processes into a single integrated process and incorporates third party information such as Employment Insurance (EI), Credit Bureau (Equifax) and Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) to verify participant information.

The CVP is a file review approach that has proven successful in ensuring financial and program integrity. Benefits of CVP include increasing the accuracy of eligibility assessments and ensuring the correct amount of financial assistance is provided only to those entitled to assistance.

This includes increasing levels of assistance if an individual or a family are not receiving all they are entitled to or reducing or terminating assistance if a person is receiving too much or is found to be no longer eligible. The province assigns baseline targets for each service delivery agent based on the number of cases on assistance for 12 months or longer to ensure ongoing program efficiency. For York Region, the baseline target was approximately 3% of caseload to be reviewed on a monthly basis. Any additional cases

reviewed above the provincial baseline target results in CVP bonus incentive funding to a maximum established limit.

3.1 Funding Incentives for CVP

Since February 2001, the Province has provided financial incentives to Ontario Works delivery agents as a strategy to promote CVP productivity and service delivery target attainment. In 2001, York Region earned approximately \$120,000 in performance based funding and in 2002 earned approximately \$133,000. Both of these performance funding payments were applied to reduce Social Assistance administration costs.

In 2003, a provincial baseline target of 118 cases per month was established for CVP reviews for York Region. The Social Assistance Division exceeded this target, achieving on average 200 reviews per month and received \$205,175, the maximum available incentive payment for York Region. This incentive funding will continue in 2004 and York Region's Ontario Works Program is on track to, once again, exceed the baseline target. At the point this report is being written, the province has not confirmed whether any incentive funding for CVP will be in place in 2005 and beyond.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 CVP Year End Outcomes for 2003

In 2003, a total of 2,407 CVP reviews were completed. Of the cases reviewed, 77% had no changes to eligibility or entitlement while 9% of cases required some type of adjustment to their allowance and/or benefit level. In 14% of cases reviewed, assistance was discontinued due to changes in eligibility or through a voluntary withdrawal from assistance by the client.

In addition, as part of the CVP, some files were referred for a more in depth review by Eligibility Review Officers (in the case of complex files, or where there may be a legitimate suspicion of fraud) or Family Support Workers, to assist in the pursuing of spousal support payments. While these referrals did not lead to eligibility or entitlement changes in all cases, the Eligibility Review and Family Support functions play an important ongoing role in ensuring the participant is receiving their correct entitlement.

York Region's outcomes in 2003, in regard to no-change, adjustment and discontinuation of cases closely mirrored province wide results and indicated an effective delivery of the overall Ontario Works Program and a high level of eligibility determination efficiency as defined by legislation.

The following table summarizes CVP file review outcomes for 2003:

Table 1
CVP File Review Outcomes – 2003

CVP Outcomes	# of Cases	Percentage
Case Terminations	349	14%
Overpayments	67	3%
Arrears	42	2%
Change in monthly entitlement	84	4%
No change in entitlement	1,865	77%
Total CVP File Review	2,407	
CVP Referrals *	# of Cases	Percentage
Eligibility Review Referrals	27	1%
Family Support Referrals	127	5%

* A referral to Eligibility Review and Family Support may not lead to change in entitlement in every case.

4.2 CVP Year to Date Outcomes – 2004

In 2004, based on the most up to date provincial CVP statistics, (January 1st to August 31st) a total of 1,428 CVP reviews (179 per month) have been completed. The baseline goal for the year is 129 per month on average. Of the cases reviewed to date, 84% had no changes to eligibility, while 6% have required some level of adjustment. Approximately 10% of cases reviewed to date have been discontinued due to changes in eligibility or through the participant's voluntary withdrawal from assistance. The increase in the percentage of cases where no changes are required, and the reduction in the percentage of discontinuations are indicators of increasing effectiveness in all levels of ongoing eligibility monitoring and the year over year impacts associated with this comprehensive review process.

The table below summarizes CVP file review year to date (January 1st to August 31st) outcomes for 2004.

Table 2
CVP File Review Outcomes To-Date
(January 1st – August 31st) – 2004

CVP Outcomes	# of Cases	Percentage
Case Terminations	147	10%
Overpayments	32	2%
Arrears	15	1%
Change in monthly entitlement	40	3%
No change in entitlement	1,194	84%
Total CVP File Review	1,428	

CVP Referrals *	# of Cases	Percentage
Eligibility Review Referrals	17	1%
Family Support Referrals	51	3%

* A referral to Eligibility Review and Family Support may not lead to change in entitlement in every case.

4.3 CVP Service Delivery Strategy

To complete the prescribed level of CVP activity determined by provincial targets, York Region has employed a successful strategy of assigning five of the existing full-time equivalent Social Assistance Case Coordinators to be dedicated exclusively to this file review function. While a dedicated staff approach is not required under provincial guidelines pertaining to CVP, York Region's Ontario Works program has found this to be the best way to ensure that the prescribed number of cases are reviewed within the year in the most effective and efficient manner possible. Service delivery standards and business processes have been established to support staff in meeting these targets.

4.4 Relationship to Vision 2026

The CVP meets the goals of Vision 2026 through responding to the needs of our residents by ensuring accurate levels of benefits to meet people's basic needs where eligible, and responding to the objective of engaged communities and a responsive Region in several ways including; meeting service needs at the right time, place and price, providing cost effective service, and evaluating and reporting on our performance.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The effective delivery of the provincially mandated CVP has been a significant contributing factor in ensuring that those eligible for assistance are receiving the correct amounts and by ensuring that only those entitled to assistance receive it. In order to meet prescribed targets in the most efficient and effective manner possible, York Region's Ontario Works program dedicates five staff to this function at a cost of approximately \$300,000. The staff have been deployed from the existing contingent and are not new or additional staff.

The effective review of social assistance case files through CVP, supported by provincial technology and third party validation of information, resulted in 349 participants exiting the Ontario Works Program in 2003. An analysis of gross and net (Regional) social assistance savings resulting from exits as a result of CVP (based on a calculation of six-months of savings), demonstrates the cost avoidance associated with this approach:

Table 3 illustrates the cost avoidance due to case terminations as a result of the CVP.

Table 3
Cost Avoidance – Case Terminations due to CVP*

Participants Exiting Through CVP	Average Monthly Assistance *	Cost Avoidance (6- months)
349	Gross \$703.68	\$1,473,505.90
	Net \$152.81	\$319,984.14

* Based on 2003 figures utilizing Regional gross and net cost per case.

The cost avoidance of \$1,473,505 gross and \$319,984 net assists in reducing the overall cost of delivering social assistance allowances in York Region and is in addition to the \$205,175 provided to York Region in incentive funding for achieving CVP performance targets. Effective outcomes are expected in 2004 based on the most up to date CVP performance data.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

There is no direct impact on local municipalities. However, all municipalities benefit through the effective and efficient delivery of this provincially mandated review process designed to ensure ongoing financial integrity in the Ontario Works Program.

7. CONCLUSION

York Region's Ontario Works Program has designed and maintained an effective strategy for meeting the requirements of the provincially defined CVP. Each year since 2001, the Program has been successful in meeting and exceeding CVP Provincial targets. The Program is on track to meet and exceed targets once again in 2004. The Consolidated Verification Process supports Provincial and Regional efforts to improve the effectiveness of case reviews through a systematic and standardized process designed to maintain the integrity of the social assistance delivery system. This process supports the ongoing efforts of staff to ensure only those residents entitled to benefits receive them and receive them in the correct amount as prescribed under the *Ontario Works Act*.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.